

Monatshefte  
FÜR DEUTSCHEN UNTERRICHT,  
DEUTSCHE SPRACHE UND LITERATUR

Official Organ of the German Section of the Modern Language  
Association of the Central West and South

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Volume XLIV

November, 1952

Number 7

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GERHART HAUPTMANN'S RANGE AS DRAMATIST  
A LECTURE<sup>1</sup>

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It is easier, if more time-consuming, to write a book about a stimulating author than to say something worth while about him in a lecture. You do not wish me to take you on a Cook's Tour of Gerhart Hauptmann's vast production. It would be unspeakably tedious to enumerate each of his forty-odd dramas and his almost equally numerous novels, stories, verse epics and other works and affix to each some characteristic label. What do most of you know about Hauptmann? You all know of him as the author of a famous play about the Silesian weavers. A few of you who are old enough will recall his winning of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1912. And some of you know that he died a very old man in May 1946, having lived just long enough to have witnessed the death of his native Silesia, the sociological extinction of a branch of the German people that had developed its characteristic physiognomy over many centuries in conjunction with the specific landscape of its habitat. Hauptmann died when all but the last of its population had been swept as fugitives to the west of the Polish zone of occupation, a few weeks before the order for his own expulsion was to become effective.

But unless you happen to pursue professional interests in German or in comparative literature, you are not apt to know that more has been written about Hauptmann than about any other German author except Goethe; that to a wide and devoted following he came over many decades to be regarded as the incarnation of the poetic spirit. His appeal was broad, deep, and lasting. Publicity and contemporary popularity are no guarantees of enduring fame. But they are a factor to be taken account of in even the sketchiest treatment of some aspects of Hauptmann's career.

Except for a short period at the beginning of his career, Hauptmann's appeal has always been broad rather than specialized. Unlike his other great contemporaries in German literature, he had little, if anything, of

<sup>1</sup> In commemoration of the ninetieth anniversary of Hauptmann's birth, November 15, 1862.

the passion of art for art's sake in his make-up. He seemed always more concerned with the matter than with the manner of what he had to say. Except in the field of drama, he was an indifferent craftsman. One may be shaken to one's depths by the total pathos of a human situation projected by Hauptmann; one is rarely entranced in his work by a conscious experience of aesthetic perfection in the phrasing, in the rhythmic and melodic values of his linguistic material. He does not give to the trained ear the ecstasy of mutation achieved in the powers of language. He has none of the metallic density of Stefan George, none of the incorporeal incandescence of Rilke. His prose has none of the disciplined suppleness and brilliant phrasing that characterize Thomas Mann's mastery of narrative and essay. But what Hauptmann does in a comprehensive way is to penetrate to the heart of all that is human. Thus he encompasses the contemporary scene in accents which are compellingly authentic. But also in the grand manner of poets like Shakespeare he recreates outstanding figures of history and myth to revel in an orchestration of passions of incomparably richer scope than the very limited range of modern civilized man.

The story of Hauptmann's youth is a saga of adventure which the old poet has himself recorded in great detail, taking full advantage of the perspective afforded by his subsequent rise to eminence. Born as the son of a hotel manager in a small Silesian spa (1862), he was largely left to his own devices as a youngster. Exceedingly alert and impressionable, he observed a great variety of town and country folk in pursuit of their callings, and visitors at the spa representing all classes of society. He associated with well brought up middle class companions, and he chummed and fought with ragamuffins of the gutter. While his adjustment to his home environment was happy on the whole, Hauptmann turned out to be very much of a problem child at school. Twice he had to repeat a year in the lower grades of the Breslau Gymnasium. According to his own account he spent these years in a state of unrelieved stupor, periodically accentuated by abject want. To escape from this hell he tried to fit himself for the career of a farm supervisor. He spent a year and a half doing chores on a country estate. The solitariness of this life made him turn inward and discover and nurse what he believed to be a spark of genius. On this diet of dreaming his ego was inflated to fantastic proportions. Believing himself destined for a career in the plastic arts, he persuaded his father to send him to the art school in Breslau. Again his temperament proved unamenable to discipline. Expelled from school, he was reinstated on the plea of one of his teachers. But at this time, not yet 19 years old, he had the good fortune to win the love of one of five well-to-do orphaned sisters. Marie Thienemann, beautiful, serious, and young, believed in her fiancé's star, and from now on her purse supplied him with the means to see the world and find himself.

He spent a term at the University of Jena, trying by voracious reading and eager discussion to overcome the handicap of many lost years. He took a Mediterranean cruise. In Rome he established himself in a sculptor's studio, afire with grandiose schemes to create a marble gallery of monumental figures. But having laid no foundation of solid craftsmanship, he literally saw his illusions collapse about his head. The shock of this deflation of his ego was cushioned by a severe attack of typhus. His fiancée, having come to visit him, nursed him back to health. They eventually returned to Germany and were married when Hauptmann was in his twenty-third year and had as yet given no proof of outstanding talent. He was convinced by now that imaginative writing was his field, and he had been wrestling rather ineffectually for some time with colossal themes from Roman and German antiquity. Settled now, first in the workers' quarters and then in the environs of the sprawling German capital, Hauptmann was soon caught up in the swing of a vigorous young literary movement that was imbued with a consciousness of pressing social problems and defined the field of vital poetry as the here and now. After much floundering, a summer's trip to his native Silesia led Hauptmann to discover the key to a treasure chest of literary materials stored up in the form of childhood memories. He went to work on a Silesian peasant drama. It was completed and performed in 1889. It evoked a storm of controversy. The spring of Hauptmann's productivity, once tapped, continued to flow steadily and abundantly. Hauptmann soon came to be recognized as the leader of the naturalistic movement. A theatre, in step with the new art, aiming at the most exacting standards of performance and devoted to Hauptmann's personal cause, provided a highly effective springboard for his rapid rise to fame.

This early phase of Hauptmann's production commands our particular attention. When I said above that Hauptmann was by and large an indifferent craftsman, that statement requires qualification. It does not hold for the early, spectacular phase of his career. On the contrary, Hauptmann's concern with living drama involved a very conscious craftsmanship, schooled by the great example of Ibsen. Hauptmann set out to advance the authenticity of dramatic representation of life beyond the point achieved by the great Norwegian master. He took over from Ibsen the medium of prose; the strict abandonment of the time-honored stage devices of the monologue and the aside; the imperceptible introduction and filling in of the exposition, the analytic technique, presupposing a long latent crisis which bursts into the open, reducing the play itself to the unfolding of a catastrophe that runs its course swiftly, in the space of a few days, or even a few hours. Thus Hauptmann's *Vor Sonnenaugang* concentrates its five acts into two nights and one day. The catastrophe of *Das Friedensfest* fills one Christmas eve. *Die Weber*, dealing with conditions of prolonged, acutely intensified misery, pre-

sents but the chance touching off of the spark and an outburst of pathetically blind, destructive, essentially futile mob fury — this in a space of probably not more than three or four days. — But Hauptmann the naturalist is intent upon refining on Ibsen's quality of realism in a variety of ways: To a much greater degree than with Ibsen, the local setting, including the background of landscape, season, and weather, is integrally tied in with the dramatic action. — The dramatic emphasis has shifted to the lower strata of society. Social stratification of great complexity is a background phenomenon of prime importance. — The social group as such may stand in the focus of interest rather than a representative individual. — Folk dialect, or rather folk dialects are employed, in meticulously authentic rendering, Silesian, Saxon, Berlin; and even the speech of characters of the bourgeois level takes on a variety of dialect shadings in response to the degree of nervous excitation evoked by the situation. — The dramatic hero, no longer necessarily the focus of our sympathies, is replaced by the mere protagonist who happens to unite in his person a maximum number of the threads that make up the tissue of the segment of life presented. — The concept of tragic guilt, so strong in Ibsen's heroes of often monumental individuality, is attenuated, dissipated, and replaced by the inescapable web of circumstance. — Lastly, personality in terms of stable, static character, is replaced by multiple dynamic reactivity. As one might say, the matter of character is transmuted into energy. This last point may require elucidation. In *Das Friedensfest* the protagonist formulates his newly found insight as follows: "Das ist mir nun aufgegangen: ein Mensch kehrt nicht nur jedem seiner Mitmenschen eine andere Seite zu, sondern er ist tatsächlich jedem gegenüber von Grund aus anders." Hauptmann's third play, *Einsame Menschen*, involves the most subtle and consistent exemplification of this doctrine of dynamic character. — I think it will come to be recognized more and more as the classic exemplar of its type.

Before long Hauptmann introduces another far-reaching modification in his dramatic method: a basic change in perspective. Ibsen had given us only the *dénouement* — the untying of the dramatic knot. The long, intricate process of the tying of all the fateful strands, usually begun many years ago in the past, is glimpsed only in retrospect, often by the device of a startling confession. Ibsen presents the past in highly foreshortened form. Hauptmann shifts the emphasis. Deeply influenced by the scientific trend of the times, the naturalist is concerned with the sympathetic comprehension of a social process. A process is a development. With Hauptmann, the acts presented on the stage come to be but significant moments of the process of development, separated by considerable intervals of time, by weeks and months. These time intervals count heavily. The dramatic configuration of forces presented in each new act has undergone a substantial realignment between the acts.

Thus, already in *Einsame Menschen* there is an interval of approximately one week separating each of acts II, III, and IV from the preceding, and in each act there is a substantial task of reorientation. We are presented with a succession of states, each showing tensions, latent in the preceding, as emergent in the succeeding. The dimension of time as duration is experienced. It gets into one's bones and may leave one with a sense of having lived through, in the space of hours, a development of months or years.

It must be admitted that it taxes the powers of drama, particularly when staged, to convey the sense of mounting tension over a long time interval. An extended present moment is more peculiarly the province of the stage, and the tightening of the screws in the flesh is apt to be felt as more acute when the curtain of time parts at short intervals, revealing ever another skeleton in the closet of the past.

Hauptmann made frequent use of the method of extended duration (which is utterly different, by the way, from the flashing of a series of loosely connected pictures as practised by Wedekind and the expressionists). Two of his dramas in this manner that rank, I think, with the great dramatic creations of all time, are *Fuhrmann Henschel* and *Rose Bernd*. Both are dialect dramas dealing with Silesian common folk. But a very different curve of tension applies to each. In *Fuhrmann Henschel* (involving a duration of more than a year) the fateful atmosphere thickens from act to act, giving one a sense of impending doom. There is just one sharp, elemental explosion of the emotions, in Act IV. The atmosphere of the final act, bringing on the inevitable catastrophe after a brief interval, is hushed throughout. In *Rose Bernd*, on the other hand, the tension is acute from the start. The first act rises to a sharp, anguished detonation of feeling on the part of Rose, the pregnant country girl. Each succeeding act mounts to a more tortured outburst. Only the fourth is an exception: here the sense of helpless distraction reaches a height where both words and any show of feeling fail; instead there is a sense of mute strangulation on the part of the cornered victim. The last act is another prolonged, final outcry, from a region where hope and help have ceased to have meaning.

Merely by way of an extended aside I must remark that Hauptmann's naturalistic drama is not limited to presenting the interplay of social forces in their somber aspect leading to catastrophe. The social process is also shot through with incongruities that make a comic appeal. In the field of comedy Hauptmann is a bold innovator discarding the oldest time-honored conventions. Wherever old-fashioned comedy centered about an individual who craftily violates the moral code, it always ended with the exposure of the culprit and the vindication of the moral order. With this convention Hauptmann pointedly takes issue in two social comedies that have the same locale and the same leading figure,

*Der Biberpelz* and *Der rote Hahn*. A time interval of some ten years between the action of the two plays suffices to show the social milieu as in a state of mushrooming transition. Both comedies are centered about a woman of humble origin who is possessed of an enormous drive and the ambition to rise in the economic and social scale. Her practice is to do so by fair means wherever possible, but to take advantage of the solid reputation she has earned in order to resort to foul means wherever a special fillip is needed to speed the ship of her fortunes. The point is that she gets away with it, both in a small and a large way. A heart attack terminates her career at the moment when her life-long ambition has been realized. She had been a washerwoman, a jewel of a washerwoman doing the work of two. But now her daughter is securely ensconced as a well-to-do member of the get-rich-quick section of the middle class. As we watch this spectacle, seeing through all of the mother's craft and scheming, we are as much moved to admiration by the adroitness and steadiness with which she plays the hazardous game as we may be shocked by the dubious means that lead to success in such a society. And if both sets of feelings are tempered by the melancholy realization that, measured by values of a more enduring sort, the game is not worth the candle, the general upshot of the spectacle is: such is life in a competitive modern society. We distinctly feel the career of the washerwoman as a symbol of the same drive and of analogous processes in all strata of our society. Sansara — they would call it in India. Here is social satire of an all-embracing variety. It is philosophical, not doctrinaire political satire, I hasten to add; for Hauptmann, though leftish in his sympathies, never subscribed to any party line or believed in political action as efficacious for the solving of basic human problems.

Hauptmann made his literary debut in the hey-day of naturalism. When he began to write the air was thick with slogans and programs demanding a literature exclusively of the here and now and in step with advancing science. Hauptmann's early dramatic production was hailed by the adherents of the young movement as the fulfilment of their programs and slogans, and to us looking back it appears indeed as the exemplary embodiment of naturalism in drama. Theorizing had its share in this, unquestionably. But the essential fact is that the awakening of Hauptmann's creative genius occurred in felicitous conjunction with a very vigorous literary movement, and that his intimate contacts with both the humble elements of society and the intellectual middle class had stored away in his memory an apparently inexhaustible wealth of material waiting for the master hand to mould it. Hauptmann spoke the authentic language of the peasant and proletarian, and without resorting to spurious stage effects he voiced the pathos and the humanity of the underprivileged.

The fresh breeze of naturalistic doctrine first buoyed the wings of Hauptmann's nascent genius. As his prowess grew, he came to realize that it tended to restrict his flight to a very limited zone. It is important to see how Hauptmann first explored the border reaches of the permitted zone before resolutely venturing out on a bolder course. First he reintroduced the quality of imagination and the vehicle of verse into naturalistic drama, in his portrayal of the feverish hallucinations and the euphoria of a dying adolescent waif, in *Hannele*. All the material came out of the girl's background of experience: fairy-tale motifs, religious imagery, wish dreams of love, aggrandizement and revenge on her cruel stepfather were blended with compelling motivation. But how convey to an audience the singing of the blood in the rapture of delirium? The disconnected fragments of speech to be pieced together as the clinical record do not tell the story. All of us have been moved in dreams to wild joy and high laughter, and on awakening suddenly we would find our lips mumbling inane verbal fragments, grotesquely at variance with the emotions vividly remembered. There are states of mind, obviously, where the subjective experience and its observable behavioristic counterpart hopelessly fail to tally. Hauptmann, realizing this, projected a counterpart that would suggest the emotional tone of the girl's experience. At a certain climactic point of tension the prose turns into verse conveying a sense of ecstasy by the sweetness and purity of its strains and the richness of its rhythmic swell. This was a quasi-legitimate extension of the creative process into a field to which outward observation gives no access, a field which could only be known and suggested by the analogy of subjective experience. Having to choose between the alternatives of either being barred from the twilight zone of the mind altogether or of rendering it in a way that preserved its emotional value, the poet chose the latter.

Hauptmann's second venture of exploration into the borderland of the naturalistic zone was an attempt to apply the rules of the here and now to historical drama. In staging the German Peasant War of 1525 in his *Florian Geyer* he endeavored to create the illusion of the same degree of authenticity that applied to his portrayal of the nineteenth century weavers. This was primarily a problem of language. Hauptmann wanted his embattled knights and peasants of Franconia to speak as they would have spoken in the age of the Reformation. The enormity of the undertaking becomes clear when you imagine a British author presenting Jack Cade's rebellion in the idiom of his day. A basically impossible task. For supposing that by the divination of genius an author versed in modern stagecraft did actually succeed in casting the peasant dialogue in an authentic mold, where is there a modern audience that could understand its vocabulary, its phrasing, its proverbialisms, its imagery? The dialect pronunciation of an age but little removed from

Chaucer would present the least of the difficulties. Hauptmann labored for years on this ambitious attempt, poring over scores of volumes of fifteenth and sixteenth century documents (in the absence, alas, of phonograph recordings!), of literature, chronicles, broadsides and eye-witness accounts, excerpting countless phrases, figures, homely saws and sentences that to him harbored a latent vitality. He who had been a hopeless dunce at school began to spell out this language, then to master it — not as a trained philologist, of course, but as a poet with an uncanny genius of assimilation. It is safe to say that he ended up with a vastly more intimate knowledge of the language habits and the mentality of that remote age than the great majority of German Ph. D. candidates specializing in that field. In this case I speak with particular conviction. I have played the sleuth tracking down the sources of the language employed by Hauptmann in his *Florian Geyer*, sometimes helped by good hunches to the discovery of startling pieces of Hauptmann's linguistic material. It has been a source of amazement again and again to observe how he would contrive to discover a gem in a dust-bin where philologically trained eyes would have seen nothing but dust. The completed play, a flat failure on the stage at its first presentation, has subsequently undergone a pruning process that simplified it and made it more manageable, and now it no longer defies successful presentation. It now draws a warmer response, to judge by reports, than Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*. And there is no question: once the thorny hurdle of its archaic language has been cleared, it has the vitality of real drama, quite unlike Ibsen's ambitious attempt to recreate the tragedy of Julian the Apostate. Ibsen, as little of a trained scholar as Hauptmann, got mired in his sources, whereas Hauptmann brought his tragedy of the Peasant War into effective dramatic focus. I would maintain none the less that the stupendous labor lavished on the linguistic side of this recalcitrant subject was worth the effort only as a demonstration of the fact that this approach leads into a blind alley. It proceeded from mistaken premises. It was an attempt of heroic proportions to stretch to the limit the demarcation lines of the material amenable to naturalistic doctrine. That Hauptmann subsequently broke through the bars, after dashing his head against them, is a fortunate result of that experience. (The later Hauptmann has no scruples about having his Carolingians, his Greeks, his Spaniards, and his Mexicans express themselves in modern German verse and prose). *Florian Geyer*, completed in 1895, was the first theme that, by material alien to his immediate experience, called powers of study and assimilation into play. Hauptmann wrestled with the material the hard way, the conscientious way. But in the pursuit of this task he discovered and developed capacities for assimilating and vitalizing large blocks of cultural tradition that are barred to the mere student of the here and now.

The gruelling grind of *Florian Geyer* earned Hauptmann his emancipation from dogmatic naturalism. Having explored the possibilities of the doctrine to its ultimate limits, having wrought his "master-piece," he could now feel himself a poet at large.

After *Florian Geyer* a new epoch in Hauptmann's life as artist begins. He now explores remote and diversified cultural climates. He tries a great many poetic media sanctioned by tradition. But from time to time he returns to the homely dialect prose of naturalism — a modern Antaeus drawing renewed strength from contact with Mother Earth.

One early, highly significant symptom of a growing emancipation from the strait-jacket of naturalistic dogma must not go unnoticed. It concerns the phenomenon of rhythm in Hauptmann's prose dramas. Naturalistic dialogue, strictly speaking, can have no traffic with rhythmical regularity. Every person's speech has a distinctive phrasing of its own, just as it is distinct in its tempo and its variations of stress and pitch. But beginning with the comedy *Der Biberpelz* and continuing for a dozen years, Hauptmann's dramatic prose production is sustained by an undercurrent of regular rhythm. There are nine plays in which the prose dialogue, from beginning to end, or with relatively small exceptions, is built on the pattern of four-beat units. The number of syllables is subject to great variation, but the number of stresses that constitute a rhythmic unit is four, or two plus two. With slight distortions of stress, pitch, and tempo whole prose plays can be read in strict rhythm, a kind of staccato singsong doggerel. A uniform vibration controls all the interplay of voices and temperaments, both dialect and standard speech. Without question, a very pronounced motor drive conditioned the fluency of Hauptmann's creative writing, and of the nine plays in question it can be said in the literal sense of the word that Hauptmann shook them out of his sleeve. Is this, then, verse in disguise? By no means. Not as though the irregular number of unaccented syllables mattered a whit. A regular, pulsing tempo is, however, only one quality constituting verse. True verse requires in addition the voicing of the unstressed syllables. In this dialogue, however, the unstressed syllables are unvoiced in the manner characteristic of colloquial prose, which reserves both stress and voiced pitch for the nodal points of the pattern. Do I need to say that no intelligent rendition of the dramas in question would accentuate the conditioning motor rhythm? The result would be intolerably monotonous. I am indeed sure that not one reader in a hundred ever becomes aware of the underlying uniformity of the pulse. I do not know, on the other hand, how and when Hauptmann became consciously aware of this motor drive. He must have become aware of it at one point and checked the tendency; for after *Und Pippa tanzt* (1906) this rhythmic pattern disappears from his prose plays. What is, then, the significant point of all this? It is that Hauptmann's creative

writing was conditioned by very powerful motor impulses which tended in the direction of verse as their natural fulfillment.

Rhythm is somehow imbedded in the very heart of the expressive phase of language. I can listen without end to a record I happen to have of a Negro sermon on Christ's last entry into Jerusalem. It begins with subdued, relaxed accents, as though the voice were taking a stroll. By and by the pace quickens as the tension is tightened, and imperceptibly the voice is on the run. At the same time the melodic curve begins to expand. The voice reaches higher and higher with each new loop. The throb increases at a steady rate. Suddenly the voice, trying again and again, has leaped to the top of its register. The voice knows this, betraying its knowledge in a quaver of exultation. And now, glorying in its triumph, the voice repeats the swing of the identically pitched curve twenty, thirty, fifty times, to the accompanying chorus of muffled Amens and Hallelujahs. Then, quite suddenly, the voice snaps. A few low-pitched, relaxed, soberly articulated phrases conclude the sermon.

Hauptmann's first venture into the field of frankly imaginative dramatic writing, his verse play *Die Versunkene Glocke* (1896), brought him the greatest popular success of his whole career. The fairy-tale setting, the red-haired elfin sprite teasing the mischievous satyr on the meadow and the mooning, melancholy merman in his well, have a haunting charm. And there is an irresistible pathos about the sad ending. The brief summer's idyll of love between the fairy girl and a mortal man who just falls short of superman stature, is sharply terminated by a fit of rage on his part. She, bearing the human child in her womb, is fated to descend into the chilly well and becomes the merman's bride, emerging only once more to seal the fate of her broken lover with a tender, death-dealing kiss. Young people, in love for the first time, are likely to luxuriate in the pathos and sentiment of this sad fairy play. But the ease of its appeal makes the quality of its ingratiating effects suspect. The play is a medley of elements derived from literature and art. The folk-tale material is interwoven with easily recognizable strands from Böcklin's paintings, from Goethe's *Satyrus* and *Faust*, Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, *Brand*, and *Lady From the Sea*, Fouqué's *Undine*, Mörike's *Orplid*, Wagner's *Nibelungen*, Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. The old Germanic gods of the *Edda* are present, and we hear the croak of Aristophanes' *Frogs*. And if the felicitous blending of all these secondary sources of inspiration is not in itself a fault, there is a more serious reproach: the planes of symbolic meaning, confusingly multiple, keep constantly interfering with one another. For besides being a fairy drama full of laughter and pathos, *The Sunken Bell* is a social drama of a man between two women, an individual challenging an outraged bourgeois society. It is a religious drama, a battleground between ascetic Christianity and sun-worshipping paganism. It is the tragedy of the artist who revels in divine inspiration

but fails in the attempt to give embodiment to his airy visions. It is, furthermore, the tragedy of mankind as a whole; there is an irremediable flaw in man, the botched product of the evolutionary process. And it is lastly a seasonal myth, tracing the cycle from nature's awakening as heralded by the spring thunder, to the rigidity of winter blanketing the valleys with the leaden clouds that drift down from the *Riesengebirge*.

Ten years later, Hauptmann again gave free rein to poetic fancy in another fairy drama, *Und Pippa tanzt* (1906). Here the sprite around which the drama of mankind revolves is a wisp of an Italian girl, but a slight shift of focus transforms her, as it were, into the incandescent essence of an infinitely fragile goblet of Venetian glass. Except for a group of gamblers, riveted to the greed for gold, all mankind comes under the spell of this spark of the divine fire. The sophisticated business man has caught only a mild case of the infection and departs from the scene after a drastic cure, whereas the swashbuckling young poet, an egocentric, uncannily fluent illusionist, making up by bravado for lack of substance, seems fated to rescue Beauty from the clutches of the Beast. The Beast is an antediluvian, shaggy old monster of a glassblower, an incarnation of dumb force; yet a slight shift of focus makes us shudder to see behind the brutish mask the features of the great God Pan. And there is an astonishing delicacy about the movements of his hulking frame, as he ministers to the shivering terrified girl whom he has carried off to his den in the winter night. Another figure of superhuman faculties is deeply involved in the drama — Wann, the sage, "ancient of the mountains," who dwells in a climate of the soul beyond the reach of coveting passion. He tries to abet the fortunes of the young couple with his wisdom, and when the beast-god is found to have stealthily entered upon the scene, the sage wrestles with him and paralyzes the brute. But even the wisdom of the sage is not proof against all contingencies. Matters come to a climax when the heart of the paralyzed monster pounds out a fearsome dance of death under his ribs, and his convulsive grasp snaps the stem of the fragile goblet in which Pippa's life resides. Here there is intricate allegory of a strangely exciting and moving quality. There is deep compassion for brute humanity, with its inarticulate longing for the divine spark. As for the youthful illusionist, so pathetically winning a figure with his inflated self-consciousness and sophisticated braggadocio, he is dismissed in the end with bloody irony. Devoid in his modern self-sufficiency of all reverence for the cosmic forces between which life is suspended, wholly deaf to the appealing voice of suffering common humanity, he has comprehended nothing of the fearsome drama enacted about him. Having been blind to everything but his egocentric passion, he is stricken with physical blindness and thrust out into the cold with a beggar's staff for his only comfort. Pippa is, perhaps, the most sprightly and scintillating of Hauptmann's

works; the most bizarre in its effects; one of the most enigmatic to interpret; yet conveying its essential message by a mastery of symbol and atmosphere. Unlike Hauptmann's early works, it is but lightly concerned with exposing the tawdry shams of the bourgeois world. It is concerned with eternal values. It celebrates the mystery of beauty as the divine spark to which everything human is responsive.

I despair of sketching in the little time left the range of Hauptmann's dramatic creation. He roamed over a wide expanse of mankind's cultural heritage to bring back treasure. From the Middle Ages Hauptmann recast the drama of the German Knight, Herr Heinrich von Aue, who is stricken with leprosy. From feeling himself the darling of the gods, he is reduced to the plane of Job, his personality disintegrating by degrees until, at the moment of supreme anguish, his cure is effected through an inner miracle, by means of a violent shock. He thinks he sees an apparition of the girl, supposedly dead, who had been the last link connecting him with mankind, when the overwhelming realization dawns upon him that it is her bodily presence which he is beholding. The ecstasy of this shock makes him confess: This moment is precious beyond compare; with such a moment in prospect I should beg on my knees to be vouchsafed a repetition of the unspeakable agony that has brought me hither. As the tone of feeling in *Der arme Heinrich* is essentially modern — in fact, Nietzschean — despite the medieval setting, I would single out as a more significant dramatic conquest of an alien climate his *Bogen des Odysseus* (1914), a drama of Odysseus' homecoming and his vengeance on Penelope's suitors. Here is an Odysseus stripped of the softening modulations of Homer's epic chant. He stands out stark as the archaic demigod in his capacity for suffering and in the inscrutable stealthiness of his guile. He wields the infallible bow of Apollo, and the immediacy of divine forces abetting him pervades the atmosphere. Whether by design or chance, this drama of Odysseus is a paradigmatic challenge to an older aesthetic that excluded the repulsive and the loathsome from dramatic representation. A little more than a hundred years earlier Schiller, echoing Lessing, had written:

When Homer presents his Ulysses in beggar's rags it is for us to choose in what detail we are willing to visualize the picture and how long we care to dwell on it. But in no case is it vivid enough to be felt as distasteful or repulsive. If the painter, however, or worse, the actor, were to depict Ulysses faithfully on the Homeric model, we would turn away from the spectacle in disgust (*Schillers Werke*, Bellermann-Petsch, B. I. VII, 230).

It is precisely the repulsive that Hauptmann employs as a cardinal element in his archaic emotional pattern (and this links his poetic drama with the drama of naturalism!). The emotional range experienced by and in Odysseus transcends the range of the human on the hither side

as well as on that beyond. It includes primitive and bestial elements of totemistic ancestral memory. This palsied, shrunken beggar, desiccated by the sun and pickled in brine, shakes with an ague that is both simulated and real, slobbers over old Laertes, his double, in filial rapture and the delirium of senile dementia. The afternoon of the homecoming (to the hut of the swineherd) is both the climactic moment of his tribulation and the supreme test of his elasticity, resourcefulness, and cunning. This is the tragic span of a demigod, far more at home in the extra-human climes of beast and god than in the median zone of man. Human drama, as distinct from this extra-human drama, grips us in the experience of Telemachus, the son, who had built up an idealized, a noble, a "classical" image of his celebrated father, believing him safely dead and devoting himself to the cult of his memory. When, by degrees, his reluctant eyes are confronted with the terrible truth that this loathsome but mysteriously magnetic beggar is indeed his father, his inner world collapses and he is all but annihilated. Seeing the shrunken beggar grow and expand to superhuman stature, Telemachus shrieks in terror:

Er wächst! Er dehnt sich! er erfüllt das Haus,  
Und niemand außer ihm kann drin noch atmen.

Brave, noble soul that he is, Telemachus is reluctant to discard his streamlined ideal of paternal greatness and embrace the infinitely more complex reality of the wily demigod in action. That Odysseus succeeds in winning over Telemachus to freely willed coöperation in his plan of retribution, hazardously improvised from moment to moment, is his greatest triumph. — Throughout the action we never glimpse Penelope's presence. But her mysterious personality pervades the drama. Infinitely alluring, aloof, and enigmatic, she is the divine spider, *arachne*, who catches the youth of the land in the toils of her sinister web. When Odysseus has done his work and slain the four most prominent suitors (not in the palace, but in the hut of the herdsman Eumaios), his concluding words are a superb summation of the mood of archaic exultation:

Was wird die Mutter sagen, Telemach,  
Daß ich ihr schönstes Spielzeug schon zerschlug?

Another late drama, bearing the strange title *Indipohdi* (meaning: "no one knows") (1920), is as far removed as the play of Odysseus from the modern world and the life of the average man, but the climate of the soul here encountered has nothing in common with either. The central figure of *Indipohdi* is a sage named Prospero in frank acknowledgment of the debt owed to Shakespeare. The locale is an island of the Mayan civilization at the time of the Conquest. Prospero's fate parallels that of his Shakespearian namesake in his having found refuge, shipwrecked, on a strange volcanic island with no other survivors but his infant daughter. He too had lost a throne, but it was a son of glor-

ious promise, a counterpart of David's Absolom, whose blind rage he had fled. And as in the *Tempest*, providential chance contrives a strange second encounter between the usurper and the aged exile who had fancied himself beyond the reach of those poignant memories of the past out of which he had distilled a contemplative wisdom. Despite himself, Prospero finds himself involved once more in the web of human passion and struggle. He is faced with fearful decisions in which the integrity of his personality is at stake. With reluctance he has acceded to the demand of the island population to assume the crown by virtue of the fact that he is revered by the priests as kin of their ancient gods, himself a white god. Even more reluctantly he has given an ambiguous promise to appease the angry deity of the volcano by restoring the ritual of human sacrifice which had been allowed to lapse by virtue of Prospero's influence. Now, as tension runs high over Prospero's delay in fulfilling his promise, circumstance places the ideal sacrificial victim in his grasp in the person of his usurper-son who, unwittingly, has once more challenged his father's authority and, unnerved in the face to face encounter by the power of Prospero's eye, has been taken prisoner. The hostile encounter between father and son has furnished the most impressive demonstration of Prospero's supernatural power. But Prospero spurns this easy solution of his dilemma. As all preparations for the sacrifice of the white prisoner are being put into effect with his sanction, he has inwardly willed his own sacrifice as the right and fitting solution. Just before the consummation of the sacrifice the priest, under instructions from Prospero, hands the son a scroll. He reads aloud his father's last will proclaiming him as his successor; and at the moment when the shock of this revelation prostrates the young man, Prospero is already beyond recall. We catch final glimpses of him as he makes his way up the mountain side through the eternal snow, to vanish in the mists that surround the crater.

In this play there is not the usual dramatic tension. In its acute phases, at any rate, the struggle of elemental passions is limited to the characters of the second and third dramatic level, particularly to Prospero's son and daughter, whose blood wells up in irresistible mutual attraction and turns the filial devotion of the young huntress into elemental rage bent upon the destruction of her father, whose purposes she is farthest from divining. But Prospero himself has long since come to dwell on a spiritual plane from which struggle and passion have been relegated as dominant concerns. He is the theoretical man, the poet, the seer. Having all but solved the problem of Archimedes (*dos moi pou sto*), having found, as it were, a foothold outside the life of changing shapes, he contemplates the scene of the awful ebb and flow of life, the mysterious loom of birth and death, the inexorably grinding mill of poignant lust and cruelty and fleeting sweetness, with a high

tranquillity. To his contemplative gaze there is so little difference between the validity of the shapes of the world of sense and those conjured up by his creative imagination, that he surveys the totality of life from, as it were, the inner heart chamber of the cosmic agency that fathers the ceaseless process. He is both the creator and the totality of creation, solipsistically encompassing a world of the stuff of illusion. Even so things happen to remind him poignantly that, for all his soaring, he is himself an element of the mysterious grimly sublime process; the magic of his mantle is subject to definite limitations. And so he reverses himself in the end. No longer turning his back upon the world of human passion as merely a fitful spectacle without reality, his last words — if I read them aright — restore the validity of the experienced process and invoke an all-embracing love as man's truest approach to reality. Thus the dominant mood of this drama is the swell of a profoundly solemn, philosophical lyricism steeped in the reverence of worship, highly reminiscent of Goethe's *Faust* and Hölderlin's *Empedokles*, which latter furnished the prototype of self-sacrifice by way of the crater. This drama, lifting us above the tension of battling passions instead of entangling us as participants in the struggle, might well have been a great poet's valedictory to the world, and was, in fact, so intended. It is shot through, moreover, with an autobiographical flavor, the poet having, somehow, arrived at a point where the vast throng of shapes, spawned over a long succession of years by his fertile imagination, came to be felt by him, it would seem, as more real a universe than the world of sense reality. (His posthumous story *Mignon* is wrought of the same stuff.) It is an acknowledgment of the essential solipsism of imaginative creation.

Cosmic drama would seem more and more to have become the aging poet's prime concern. The roots of this preoccupation had, as we have seen, a long period of growth. The life process as such was a theme woven into the *Sunken Bell*. It was the very stuff out of which Hauptmann distilled the ecstatic martyrdom of the medieval knight, der arme Heinrich, the fragile iridescence of his Pippa, the passion-vindication cycle of the demigod Odysseus, the deep, rich orchestration of *Indipohdi*. It is once more the theme of the late tragedy of *Veland*, completed in 1925 but in process of growth over nearly thirty years. Veland, the Smith, (Wieland, Wölund) the Germanic demigod artificer, captured and maimed by a mortal king, has bided his time to wreak frightful vengeance on his captor and his kin before soaring aloft on the wings he has fashioned in his cavernous island smithy. Veland's case is very different from that of Odysseus. The wily Greek had only his genius of improvisation to rely on; here retribution is ground out with ultimate grimness according to plan. The acting out of the whole span of mental torture to which the king is subjected borders on the

unendurable. It is made endurable only by the realization that, paradoxically, in the triumph of retribution — itself a measure of *Veland*'s accumulated agonies — the avenger himself shares to the full the unspeakable torture endured by his victim. The slaking of his vengeance is in itself the most acute stage of the martyrdom of the god. And in full knowledge of the inevitability of this martyrdom, the gentle suasion of the Good Shepherd's strains that would tempt *Veland*'s soul to another way of settling his score is dismissed as unavailing. It is fated that the cosmic tragedy of violence and retribution, of birth, struggle and torment, re-enact itself from eon to eon, involving even the collapse of All-Father's rule, until such time, perhaps, as the winged God's peregrinations may be destined to reach the confine of ultimate nothingness. In *Veland* life is envisaged under the aspect of total tragedy; and the affirmation of this pantragedy (for protest is, in a measure, engulfed in affirmation) can find voice only in accents of ecstatic agony. With unmistakable intent Hauptmann designated the spectacle of *Veland* as a tragedy. None of his other dramas, except *Florian Geyer* and the very late tetralogy of the *House of Atreus* written in the shadow of the second world war (and the posthumously published *Magnus Garbe*) is so entitled. And to reinforce its solemnity, he cast *Veland* in the meter of Greek tragedy, the classic trimeter, otherwise all but absent from his work.

I have chosen to give you a glimpse of certainly not inconsequential aspects of a great poet's work. I began by pointing out Hauptmann's significance as the creator and unchallenged master of German naturalistic drama. I continued by showing his emancipation from the confines of naturalistic dogma in his attempt to recreate the ultimate limits of what the elect of mankind have experienced in their highest tragic flights. In this Hauptmann remains a humanist in the comprehensive sense of the word; for only a narrow view would presume to restrict the term humanism to the experimental range of the common man. Time has prevented my giving you more than scattered glimpses, but enough, perhaps, to conclude that Hauptmann's genius is deeply religious. For it is not any special phase of human activity, but the whole organic mystery of life and death in its inexorableness, the relentless cruelty of its blind drive, its brief moments of ecstasy, on which he dwells. It is to this central mystery that Hauptmann recurs again and again, with fascination, rapture, awe, and that sense of reverence that prostrates itself before what is eternal and passes human understanding.

## GERHART HAUPTMANN'S RELATION TO AMERICAN LITERATURE AND HIS CONCEPT OF AMERICA<sup>1</sup>

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When Gerhart Hauptmann arrived for his second stay in the United States in 1932, one of the questions put to him during an interview was: "What do you know of American literature?" He replied that in his childhood he had avidly read Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, as any German youngster would, and that later he became enthusiastic about Walt Whitman, whom he considered the American poet most rooted in the soil. He had read some works by Emerson and Longfellow and avowed esteem for Edgar Allan Poe, especially his essay *Eureka*. Of the modern American writers he admired Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser, and Eugene O'Neill, some of whose dramas he had seen performed in Berlin.<sup>2</sup>

In his autobiography, *Das Abenteuer meiner Jugend*, Hauptmann reports that he learned how to read with the aid of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*. Frequently the boy Gerhart identified himself with Chingachgook and was for a time nicknamed after this Indian chieftain.<sup>3</sup> In *Die Insel der großen Mutter* the author has Phaon begin his education in a similar manner by reading Cooper's tales (*DgW* IX 347). In an attempt at a self-analysis of his literary beginnings, Hauptmann believes that his romantic attachment to Cooper's descriptions of the primeval forest had a large part in shaping the background for his first dramatic attempt *Germanen und Römer* (*DgW* XIV 466). Later, during his stay in Connecticut, the *Leatherstocking* romance is still vividly before his mind (*DgW* XVII 202).

Conditions in the America of the 1870's were often the topic of conversation when he visited the house of his aunt, where a distant relative had found refuge after many years of futile struggling for a foothold in the United States. "Im Kometen," Hauptmann writes, "dem Straehlerschen Hause, stand man . . . damals mit einem Fuß in Amerika" (*DgW* XIV 211). A few years later, his friend Alfred Ploetz and the latter's father instilled in him a romantic longing for distant lands where a Utopian colony might be erected on the pattern of the settlement founded by Etienne Cabet in 1848. This adventure was pursued with earnestness by a small group of young men who were intent on a social experiment on a communal property basis and who called themselves

<sup>1</sup> Paper read in the Anglo-German Literary Relations Section of the MLA, December, 1951.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick W. J. Heuser, "Gerhart Hauptmanns Amerikafahrt 1932," *Gerhart Hauptmann Jahrbuch*, vol. II (Breslau: Maruschke & Berendt, 1937), 113 f.

<sup>3</sup> Gerhart Hauptmann, *Das Abenteuer meiner Jugend*, in *Das gesammelte Werk, Ausgabe letzter Hand*, Part I (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1943), XIV, 54. Hereafter this edition will be referred to in the text as *DgW*.

the "Icarians," after Cabet's book *Voyage en Icarie*. For this undertaking, Vancouver Island or a South American country was proposed (*DgW* XIV 561), but grave doubts of the feasibility of the project were entertained and Ploetz was dispatched to Iowa in order to survey the fate of the colony founded by Cabet and to profit from its experiences. After initial favorable impressions Ploetz gained greater insight and suddenly returned completely disillusioned, so that the experiment planned with considerable thoroughness was abandoned.<sup>4</sup> A brief reference to the plan is contained in Hauptmann's drama *Vor Sonnenauftgang*. Nevertheless, the potentialities of America had left such an impression on Ploetz that he attempted later to establish himself for a while as a practising physician in Connecticut.

The lure of the pioneer's life never left Hauptmann. In 1924, he read with special interest Faust's book *Die Deutschen in Amerika* and exclaimed:

Das Deutschland in Amerika zu entdecken . . . das reizt mich ungemein! Die Wege nachzugehen, die die ersten deutschen Kolonisten drüben gegangen sind. Denn sie haben doch die riesige Urbarmachung der Wälder, diese gewaltige kolonisatorische Vorarbeit, geleistet . . . Ich möchte einmal eine Reise nach Amerika machen . . . auf den Spuren der ersten deutschen Kolonisten.<sup>5</sup>

Little did he realize that eight years later he would indeed journey to America, though the trip was not of the type envisaged here. German contributions to American culture filled him with pride, and he recalled having met in his brother Carl's house a promising young physicist, Karl Proteus Steinmetz, whom the Hauptmanns supported and who was later destined to become one of America's most famous inventors (*DgW* XIV 749).

An American writer who seems to have had some influence on the intellectual development of the budding author is Walt Whitman. In the days of Hauptmann's membership in the association *Durch*, Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* made a great impression on the group, and Hauptmann lays claim to the fact that it was partly their enthusiasm which made this author known internationally and led to the fine German translation by Hans Reisiger (*DgW* XIV 771). Hülsen reports that Hauptmann never tired praising the American and quoting from his works.<sup>6</sup> In a discussion of the merits of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, he characterizes his work with Whitman's words as permeated by "immortal courage and prophecy."<sup>7</sup> He concludes a speech on the future of the German drama with a quotation from Whitman:

<sup>4</sup> Hans von Hülsen, *Gerhart Hauptmann*, (Leipzig: Reclam, 1927), p. 25.

<sup>5</sup> Hans von Hülsen, *Freundschaft mit einem Genius*, (Munich: Funck, 1947), p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> Hülsen, *Freundschaft mit einem Genius*, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>7</sup> *Der Baum von Gallowayshire*, *DgW* XVII 149; Walt Whitman, *Complete Prose Works* (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1898), p. 216.

I hail with joy the oceanic, variegated, intense practical energy, the demands for facts, even the business materialism of the current age. . . . But woe to the age or land in which these things, movements, stopping at themselves, do not tend to ideas. As fuel to flame, and flame to the heavens, so must wealth, science, materialism — even this democracy of which we make so much — unerringly feed the highest mind, the soul.<sup>8</sup>

The admiration for Whitman remained with Hauptmann throughout his life. In Kiesewald, twenty minutes from the Wiesensteine, he had built himself a log-cabin retreat *Am weißen Born*, where he spent mornings reading and writing. Prominent among his books there were Buddha and Whitman. "Das muß man hier lesen," he is reported as saying.<sup>9</sup>

Next to Whitman, it is Ralph Waldo Emerson whose work and whose correspondence became an object of study to Hauptmann (*DgW* XVII 219). In his speeches he refers to Emerson repeatedly, and he is well acquainted with the American's efforts toward emancipation of the slaves and with his concept of Napoleon as a protagonist of democracy. He is eager to accept Emerson's belief that the coming hero of democracy will be the *liebende Mensch*, and he adds "Das ist auch mein Glaube, obwohl es zur Zeit gar nicht so aussieht und wir uns eher von aller Demokratie und aller Liebe zu entfernen scheinen."<sup>10</sup> From the writers of the Emerson circle he read Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, which served to set the background for the description of Laurence Hobema's rustic residence on the *Île des Dames* (*DgW* IX 398).

Hauptmann visited the eastern seaboard of the United States twice. The events of both journeys have been summarized in articles by Frederick W. J. Heuser<sup>11</sup> and need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that the reason for Hauptmann's trip in 1894 was a purely personal one, namely to patch up his marital difficulties. He was reunited with his wife Marie, who with their three sons had gone to visit the Ploetz's at Meriden, Connecticut. Accordingly, Hauptmann spent most of his eighty-nine days there, but also made excursions to New York City and Washington. His impressions of America at this time were far from favorable. Life in New York appeared to him dominated by material aspects and devoid of artistic and intellectual pursuits. To be sure, he does not seem to have made much of an attempt to penetrate into American culture. The events attendant upon the first performance of *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* in New York City were hardly of the kind that might evoke a sympathetic feeling toward the New World. The following scathing aphorisms can perhaps be attributed to this period:

<sup>8</sup> *Der Baum von Gallowayshire*, *DgW* XVII 154; Walt Whitman, *op. cit.*, p. 243 f.

<sup>9</sup> Hülsen, *Freundschaft mit einem Genius*, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>10</sup> Hülsen, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>11</sup> "Gerhart Hauptmann's Trip to America in 1894," *Germanic Review*, XIII (1938), 3-31. "Gerhart Hauptmanns Amerikafahrt 1932," *op. cit.*

Wieviel Phantasie hat Amerika gesucht, gefunden, begründet!  
Wieviel Nüchternheit ist das Resultat!

Ist es nicht im Hinblick auf Amerika unsere verdammte Pflicht und Schuldigkeit, durch und durch Europäer zu sein? (DgW XVII 391)

Three of his works show reflections on this first trip to America: the novel *Atlantis* describes events similar to those experienced on ship-board and in connection with the quarrels over the *Hannele* production. Here the author has several characters make uncomplimentary remarks about life in America. The action of two acts of the drama *Dorothea Angermann* takes place in Meriden, but this is done with no other intention than to give an American milieu. The *Buch der Leidenschaft* is the poetic version of the turmoil of the author's soul in being torn between two women, and since it centers on his inner conflict, the book gives few external facts on American life. The *Hannele* disputes, no doubt, left a bitter taste in his mouth, and he was shocked to find that bigotry and narrow-mindedness were even more rampant in free America than in censor-ridden Imperial Germany. He may well have thought of these experiences later, when he was amused to hear that during Prohibition some super-conscientious spinsters pleaded to have the wine glasses and decanters, which Washington and Lafayette had used, removed from Mount Vernon.<sup>12</sup>

Hauptmann's second trip to the United States, thirty-eight years later, is entirely different. It is a triumphant whirlwind journey in which every day of the three weeks is filled with official receptions and honors. He comes as the recognized leading German man of letters to give the main address in the celebrations of the centennial of Goethe's death. He is awarded the honorary doctorate from Columbia University and holds his famous oration entitled *Goethe* in New York, Cambridge, Baltimore, and Washington. He is received by President Hoover, Senator Borah, Speaker of the House Garner, and many prominent citizens. Mayor Walker of New York City hails him as the "mediator in intellectual and cultural life of the German and American peoples."<sup>13</sup> Near New York City he visits the house formerly inhabited by Poe.<sup>14</sup> In Cambridge he is quartered in the historic Craigie House and delights in viewing the many mementos of Longfellow's stay in Germany.<sup>15</sup>

Among contemporary American writers he meets Elmer Rice, John Erskine, Sinclair Lewis, Frazier Hunt, Theodore Dreiser, and Helen Keller. By far the deepest impression seems to have been gained from attending a production of *Mourning Becomes Electra* and meeting its

<sup>12</sup> C. F. W. Behl, *Zwiesprache mit Gerhart Hauptmann* (Munich: Desch, 1949), p. 162.

<sup>13</sup> Heuser, "Gerhart Hauptmanns Amerikafahrt 1932," *op. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

author Eugene O'Neill. He follows the performance intently and is impressed by its dramatic effectiveness. He finds a striking coincidence in the fact that the stage setting with the Doric columns, so common to the Colonial style of architecture, serves as a link between the New England background and the Greek legend. It is interesting to observe that when Hauptmann himself begins to deal with the Atreidae theme eight years later, he creates a tetralogy of gigantic dimensions to which he became attracted by Goethe's sketch for a planned sequel to his *Iphigenie auf Tauris*. Whereas O'Neill brings the action close to modern times, Hauptmann rather goes in the opposite direction in portraying more elemental passions and moving back in time from Goethe's conception of the antique. Hauptmann considered O'Neill one of the greatest living dramatists, but the admiration was mutual, for the American playwright conceded that it would be impossible to imagine what the drama of the English-speaking peoples would be without Strindberg, Ibsen, and Hauptmann, adding that since he began to write he had always looked up to Hauptmann as his model.<sup>16</sup> While the New York theater in Hauptmann's opinion had made great strides since his first journey, he still called it "nüchtern-unfestlich."<sup>17</sup>

In several addresses to his American hosts and in later statements on his impressions in America, Hauptmann voiced many expressions of praise and awe at the "tatkraftiger Kontinent" and the "Reich der Zukunft,"<sup>18</sup> yet he did not close his eyes to the unsolved problems. He showed great interest in the status of the negro, and the vivid descriptions of DuBose Heyward's *Porgy* made a deep impression on him.<sup>19</sup> America, he felt, was much more European-minded than Europe was American-minded.<sup>20</sup> "Wenn Sie wissen wollen, was Europa ist, müssen Sie nach Amerika gehen" (*DgW* XVII 409). The story of the settlement of America and its economic expansion he considered an impressive chapter in the history of humanity.<sup>21</sup> He admired the scientific achievements. In a discussion of D. C. Peattie's book on great natural scientists he exclaimed: "Hier atmet Jugendlichkeit und Frische in der Herstellung reiner Beziehungen zur Natur; so etwas mußte aus Amerika kommen."<sup>22</sup>

In Hauptmann's judgment, the secret to American success lies in the Americans' willingness to criticize themselves<sup>23</sup> and in the fact that they are not burdened by tradition.<sup>24</sup> In this way the Americans create

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127 f.

<sup>17</sup> Behl, *op. cit.*, p. 17 f.

<sup>18</sup> Goethe, *DgW* XVII 231; *Bei der Heimkehr aus Amerika*, *DgW* XVII 235.

<sup>19</sup> Behl, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

<sup>20</sup> Heuser, "Gerhart Hauptmanns Amerikafahrt 1932," *op. cit.*, p. 129; Joseph Chapiro, *Gespräche mit Gerhart Hauptmann*, (Berlin: Fischer, 1932), pp. 209, 220.

<sup>21</sup> Chapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

<sup>22</sup> Behl, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>23</sup> Chapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

a new culture, a new concept of progress.<sup>25</sup> This new culture Hauptmann defined as the balance between fancy and reason, and it seemed to him that the American is on the way to establishing this harmony. He added the hope that reason will not in time enslave fancy.<sup>26</sup> In a speech entitled *Die Epopöe von der Eroberung Amerikas* before the Lotos Club in New York he said:

Ich befind mich unter Amerikanern: ein Begriff, der wohl im Herzen George Washingtons sich zuerst gebildet hat. Heute hat dieser Begriff auf der ganzen Erde einen Fanfarenwert. Mögen sich innerhalb der Vereinigten Staaten auch noch so widerstrebende Mächte geltend machen; außerhalb ist der Begriff des Amerikaners gleichbedeutend mit unbefangener Tatkraft, Selbstbewußtsein und einem selbstverständlichen, freien Fortschrittsgeist, sodaß jeder Mensch des Fortschritts auch außerhalb der Vereinigten Staaten . . . teil an diesem Begriffe nimmt. Er erkennt sich gleichsam zum Amerikaner. Und sofern der Amerikaner weiterhin sich selbst versteht, wird er weiterhin Jahrhundert nach Jahrhundert an der Spitze menschheitlicher Entwicklung das Banner des Fortschritts durch die Zeit tragen (DgW XVII 204 f.).

Quite in contrast, Hauptmann's last statements about America in 1945, are words of bitter denunciation at the inhumanity of the destruction of Dresden by air bombardment, which he happened to witness on February fourteenth of that year:

Dieser heitere Morgenstern der Jugend hat bisher der Welt geleuchtet, und ich habe den Untergang Dresdens unter den Sodom- und Gomorra-Höllen der englischen und amerikanischen Flugzeuge persönlich erlebt . . . Von Dresden aus sind herrliche Ströme durch die Welt geflossen, und auch England und Amerika haben durstig davon getrunken. Haben sie das vergessen?<sup>27</sup>

It was to be expected that the Soviet overlords of the "Demokratisches Deutschland" would pounce upon these lines and make political capital by publishing them repeatedly. But who would seriously attempt to construe this statement as the poet's definitive judgment of American culture? These words were uttered by a broken, ailing man who in his eighty-third year of life suffered under the impact of the chaos of the concluding days of the war, the days in which he despaired of humanity in general, the days in which even Goethe, his erstwhile recognized "großer Lehrer" became an "ahnungsloser Spießer" and in which he spoke of Goethe's work: "Ich nenne nicht mehr deine Histoire ein Wunder, sondern Plunder."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>27</sup> Gerhart Hauptmann, "Die Untat von Dresden," *Aufbau*, 6. Jahrgang, (1950), p. 109.

<sup>28</sup> Hülsen, *Freundschaft mit einem Genius*, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

Thus it is shown that Hauptmann occupied himself with American life and letters throughout his life. The influence of American thought on Hauptmann and his works is by no means insignificant even though no important literary creation was inspired by it. The naturalism of Whitman, the transcendentalism of Emerson, the expressions of many other American writers were bound to find in Hauptmann a receptive and kindred soul. They became ingredients in the total fluidum of his thinking, though with less intensity than the influence exercised by his German precursors or European foreign writers such as Shakespeare, Ibsen, Zola, and Tolstoy.

His two visits to the United States gave Hauptmann some insight into the American way of life; after his second stay he gave unstinting praise to the economic achievements and the sterling nature of the American character, yet harbored the slight suspicion that the arts were not getting their full share in the cultural progress of the younger nation. He said then: "Wenn ich nicht Deutscher wäre, möchte ich Amerikaner sein. Es ist hier unendlich viel auch im Ideellen zu tun, und das große amerikanische Volk, soviel es auch erreicht haben mag, ist noch immer bildsam und zukunftsreich."<sup>29</sup> Though he believed in a great future for this country in things intellectual and its ability to surmount all obstacles, he spoke of the "Exilhafte der amerikanischen Psyche" (*DgW* XVII 261). "Ich war zweimal in Amerika," he said, "beide Male hatte ich das Gefühl bei der Rückkehr, als müßte ich, den Boden Europas berührend, in die Knie sinken. Dann aber habe ich hier oft wieder das Verlangen nach Amerika und das Gefühl, als hätte ich, jung hinübergekommen, dort bleiben können."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Heuser, "Gerhart Hauptmanns Amerikafahrt 1932," *op. cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>30</sup> Behl, *op. cit.*, p. 176.



The earth was heaved, it quaked! Within their cities  
Men tremble, fearful of the impending doom.  
What seemed immured for all eternity  
Now crumbles, crackles; groaning sways its base.  
The stars too hurled themselves out of their orbits.  
A feverish heat consumes both earth and men.  
The gods — almost forgotten in days of affluence —  
Regain their wonted rev'rence and respect.  
With dire looks they menace everywhere  
The race of men that now in sudden fright  
All about them encounters its old gods.  
O Queen! Our life's concern no longer is *Wellbeing*,  
Nor gaining a mite More or Less. — O, no!  
Our *All's* at stake! Good manners, fine appearance,  
The noble conduct, precious made through custom,  
Has fallen prey to unleashed demon hosts.  
Lo! desiccated, riven glows earth's crust.  
The strangler Hunger murders man and beast.  
Besides him, like a she-wolf, stalks the Pest,  
Yea, even man turns into wolf 'gainst man,  
And with his pack appeases his fierce hunger.  
The wellsprings have run dry, instead of water  
The river-god now guards the scorched rocks.

— From Gerhart Hauptmann, *Iphigenie in Aulis*.

Translated by J. F. L. Raschen

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## A PLAY AND TWO AUTHORS

### Zuckmayer's Version of Hauptmann's "Herbert Engelmann"

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Literary criticism concerns itself, generally, with the finished products of a poet, novelist, or dramatist. Sometimes the critic has an opportunity to gain insight into the genesis of poetic works when he finds, besides the finished version, earlier, unfinished or unmatured versions of a piece of literature. The comparative study of several versions of the same literary work reveals the poet's mind at work, so to speak; the creative process of literary endeavor appears in sharper relief.

While it is on the whole not a large part of published literature which can thus be studied with the help of other extant versions, it is indeed a rare occurrence when two authors have, successively, expended their efforts upon a single work. Such is the case with the drama *Herbert Engelmann*. Gerhart Hauptmann, the ranking dramatist of his generation, wrote it in 1924 and never published it. It was one of the many manuscripts found among his effects when he died. The executors of his literary will decided to submit the drama to Carl Zuckmayer, the outstanding dramatist of the next generation, with the suggestion that he give to it that form which in his estimation the subject matter and existing treatment merited.

The result is the unusual occurrence of the publication of one drama under the names of two dramatists. Our age has of course familiarized us with the practice of team-production, especially in the field of stage works. The literary critic would consider the usual results of such collaboration — film scripts, librettos for musical productions, or comedies of the more evanescent kind — rather beneath the dignity of his professional attention. But when the names are of the rank of Hauptmann and Zuckmayer, the matter deserves our attention.

The following observations summarize the results of a close scrutiny of the two versions, as published in one volume by C. H. Beck, Munich, 1952. In order to facilitate the understanding of these observations for those who may not be familiar with the play, a brief synopsis is given:

The locale of the first two acts is the pension run by Frau Kurnick in Berlin. The time is a few years after the first World War, that is, contemporaneous with the writing of the play in its first version. The third and fourth acts play in a small dwelling in the outskirts of Berlin, about half a year later.

The characters assembled in the pension represent the heterogeneous and unstable composition of the German middle class of the time. They have all been physically and psychologically uprooted by the war and the subsequent social and economic changes. Frau Kurnick, a pastor's

widow, has no liking for running the boarding house and harks back to better and calmer times in the parish. There are two former majors, who in the course of the play appear to have attached themselves to the police force, criminal division. They are representatives of the *old Law* and *old Order*. Adventurers and eccentrics, spiritists and stage flotsam constitute the background against which the main characters move. Herbert Engelmann, now returned from war and captivity in Siberia, had been a rather brilliant student at the beginning of the war; he enlisted and went through its hell, experiencing as complete an array of horrors as is possible to ascribe to one human's fate. He is a moral and physical wreck. Christa, daughter of the house, through her love (that is, pity) for him, tries to save him, finally marries him, and her endeavor for his salvation seems a success. Then (Act III) an event from Herbert's recent, post-war past catches up with him: he has committed murder and robbery, is tried, and freed for lack of evidence. The fourth act offers him an opportunity to start anew by going away to finish his interrupted studies. Christa cannot conceal any longer from him that she knew intuitively right along of the blot on his past. It is from the hell of his own conscience that she had wanted to save him, to offer him a new life, a future. Now that this future is in his grasp the realization of her sacrifice truly redeems him. He recognizes that the only future for him, "freed for lack of evidence," is in another world. He ends his life, at peace with himself, and Christa accepts this last sacrifice on her part: to be widowed in order to give him peace.

Zuckmayer himself gives us a number of do's and don't's which he followed in his revision of Hauptmann's original. He attempted to preserve the general tone of language, which he calls that of an elevated matter-of-factness. That called for no more effort on his part than the kind of correction any manuscript receives upon second or third reading: an improving of grammar was necessary for instance. When Hauptmann says: "Das Zimmer ist schon . . . an einen Kriegsbeschädigten zugesagt," Zuckmayer has it: ". . . einem Kriegsbeschädigten zugesagt." Hauptmann's "Es geht mir besser wie andern Leuten" appears properly in Zuckmayer as ". . . besser als andern Leuten." Hauptmann's misuse of the conditional in expressions like: "Es würde mir lieber sein" is corrected into: "Es wäre mir lieber." The somewhat bookish simple past tense" . . . dem Fürsten gelang es nicht," becomes the more colloquial present perfect " . . . ist es nicht gelungen." Zuckmayer's penchant for grammatical niceties is evident when he changes "Sein Vater hatte einen Kramladen in dem Dorfe, wo dein Großvater Gutsbesitzer war" into: "Sein Vater hatte den Kramladen in dem Dorfe, in dem der meine Gutsbesitzer war."

Zuckmayer further changes Hauptmann's language and achieves what he calls *Verknappung* and *Verhärtung*. A stepping up of the tempo

of expression is evident throughout the revision, either by omissions or by rearrangement to facilitate a more rapid flow of the words. Examples:

*Hauptmann*

Sie haben mir sogar eine kleine *Kühnheit* hie und da ungestraft hingehen lassen, so daß ich in meinem Glücksrausch vielleicht etwas zu übermütig geworden bin. Und so habe ich denn vielleicht einen *unerlaubten Schritt* getan, der aber schließlich als *eine Verfehlung aus Leidenschaft* zu betrachten ist.

*Hauptmann*

Christa, ich bin vollständig ohne Vorurteil. Und überdies eine Frau wie Sie, eine Erscheinung wie Sie darf sich überall sehen lassen. Ich wünsche mit Ihnen Furore zu machen, Sie sind nicht die erste und nicht die letzte Frau, die sich meine Kreise im Sturm erobert hat und erobern wird. Mit Bezug auf die Frauen ist man bei uns in gewissen Fällen weitherzig.

Space does not permit more examples. There is hardly a page where it could not be pointed out that Zuckmayer increased the tempo and heightened the accent of the verbal utterances.

To achieve this, he often inserts little new speeches, merely to interrupt the long flow of one person's talk. Thus the dialogue becomes alive and pulsating where it might have dragged. Such insertions also serve to tighten the logical sequence of utterances where gaps seemed to disturb the understanding.

Insertions are regular in Zuckmayer's stage directions. His sense of drama compels him to tie together the spoken word and the stage action, which he describes in considerable detail, often in so doing furnishing additional characterization. There is, for instance, in Hauptmann, a brief stage description of the doings leading to a "séance" or secret meeting of some of the fringe characters in the pension. Zuckmayer seizes upon this opportunity to deliver a perfectly hilarious sequence of stage business, which accentuates the eccentric character of the persons involved while furnishing some needed comic relief in the somber atmosphere.

This same zest for vivid, life-like representation on stage impels Zuckmayer to execute a scene which had been left in rudimentary form. Hauptmann has the guests of the pension arrive for dinner and then merely proceeds to enumerate in a long list of about two dozen items

*Zuckmayer*

... auch wenn ich eine unverzeihliche *Kühnheit* begangen, einen *unerlaubten Schritt* gewagt habe, so dürfte er doch, als eine *Verfehlung aus Leidenschaft*, Verzeihung finden.

*Zuckmayer*

Ich bin, wie Sie wissen, ein Mann ohne jegliches Vorurteil. ... Und eine Frau wie Sie, mit Ihrer Erscheinung, Ihrem Charme, Ihrem liebenswürdigen Geist, würde sich meine Kreise im Sturm erobern. Mit Ihnen könnte ich mich überall sehen lassen, ich würde mit Ihnen Furore machen. Gerade in dieser Beziehung ist man in meinen Kreisen recht weitherzig.

the topics of conversation. Zuckmayer follows this list, using approximately half of the items in the executed version of the dialogue. The crazy-quilt pattern of talk among these "off-center" characters is an ingenious characterization of these people, their time, and its thoroughly confused moral and intellectual climate. This scene serves to extend the uncertainty, lurking surprise, loss of clear delineation, and mixture of the good and the bad, the sound and the sick, which is the atmosphere in which the main character moves. Significantly, Zuckmayer lets Engelmann sit through this conversation hardly saying a word — increasing the mystery about him.

The most obvious addition in Zuckmayer's version is one new character: the widow of the murdered man. Zuckmayer felt that this addition was necessary to vivify the main theme of the play: the impact of murder upon the survivors, upon society. In a brief scene, this woman is introduced to the audience in conversation with Herbert's young wife, whose agony in talking to this poor victim of Herbert's act is all too apparent. Through this scene Zuckmayer increases in the spectator the impression that Herbert's wife knows and has known for some time the dark and evil something threatening from his past.

While the study of the details of Zuckmayer's changes in the textual form of the play could be carried into great detail with illuminating results, it must suffice here to summarize these aspects of his work. It may be said that the language was brought up to date by more modern or more appropriate idiom; it was cleaned up in its purely grammatical aspects. There is a great deal more accent upon the essential in the spoken word, an accent which at times seems to have shifted slightly to a new (Zuckmayer's) plane, and away from the existing (Hauptmann's) emphasis. There is much more precise indication of stage action, with considerable addition in this sphere. With sure touch the experienced dramatist of the contemporary stage improves the already dramatic version of his senior.

More important than these aspects of change are those alterations, additions, and shifts which reflect a change in attitude, interpretation, or philosophical approach.

In his own explanatory remarks concerning the revision, Zuckmayer states his belief that the work is essentially a historical play, but not a *Zeitstück*. Rather, he sees its action and theme laid "Between the times." Thus, his treatment reflects the idea that neither the time of the first writing of the play (1924) nor that of the second writing (1951) should be strictly determining. The human tragedy contained in the play should appear over and above the incidentals of the times.

This, if one pauses to reflect, is a difficult assignment. Hauptmann's version frankly places the action in the present, that is, the immediate post-war period. By references to events, names, and condi-

tions, the reader or spectator is left little latitude in fixing this point in time. Zuckmayer altered enough of the references to the locale and the specific time to make the play live both in its original time and in ours. One significant change of this sort is the switch in Herbert's professional interests. Hauptmann's Herbert dabbles in medicine, has published a few short stories, and is at work on a novel which is laboriously being completed chapter by chapter. Zuckmayer's Herbert also works in his study, but his field is physics, modern atomic physics, perhaps not as advanced as the year 1952 — or even the year 1945, which augured a new era — but certainly much more likely to make his absorption and fascination understandable to a contemporary audience than the writing of a novel would.

References to Freudian psychology are more matter-of-fact, more direct, and more informed. One of the characters in Hauptmann's play suggests to Herbert's future mother-in-law: "Weshalb also weiter darum herumreden? Wenn Sie wollen, stelle ich gern mal eine Generaluntersuchung mit ihm an. Wenn er selbst will, notabene. Denn bisher hat er jede Anregung dieser Art geflissentlich überhört." In Zuckmayer we find: "Warum also weiter drum herumreden? Ich halte es für einen Fall von manischer Depression mit schizophrenem Einschlag." This is the tone of present day drawing room conversation on the popular level.

A striking example of both accentuation and shift in attitude owing to the changed times appears in Act III when Herbert's friends, cabaret artists, come to congratulate him upon the success of one of his criminalistic sketches, the writing of which is a somewhat sinister and ominous hobby of his. But Herbert is irretrievably moody and has just expressed an extremely pessimistic, even nihilistic outlook. Whereupon Goldstein, his friend, launches upon the following attempt at rescue: "Mensch, hör endlich mit deinem verwünschten Schopenhauerschen Pessimismus auf. Es geht dir doch gut, was kohlst du denn! Der Krieg ist vorüber, allenthalben atmet man langsam auf." Zuckmayer adds zest, incidental characterization of Goldstein, and the much more cynical wisdom of a later time: 'Mensch, Meier, hör endlich auf zu klönen. Es geht dir doch prima. Du lebst hier wie Bolle auf'm Milchwagen. Was kohlst du denn? Der Krieg ist vorüber, in Locarno liegense sich in den Armen, die Sowjets mit den Lords von England Wang an Wang, da fließen die Tränen zusammen, der gerechte Briand und unser Stehauf-Stresemännchen schmatzen einander schon beim Frühstück ab, die Mark ist stabilisiert, es gibt wieder Schlagsahne, die Theater gehen, die Revolution ist wegen Mangels an Beteiligung abgesagt, der rote Hölz sitzt in Moabit, der braune Adolf in Landsberg, die Welt atmet auf. Was willst du mehr?"

The exploitation of the obvious and deplorable parallels of the time after World War I and World War II is carried to the limit of the historically supportable!

The central problem of the play could be stated thus: war as mass murder is approved by society; but murder as an individual crime is condemned by all standards of ethics. The attitude toward this problem in the two versions of the play gives not only a clue to the basic philosophies of the two writers; it reflects fundamental and subtle changes of interpretation and characterization. We find it both in omissions and additions. Zuckmayer, in his own explanation, suspects that Hauptmann himself, had he finished the play, would have made Herbert Engelmann a more struggling, searching character than he appears in the original version, where his troubles are fairly completely explained on the basis of his war experience, the demoralizing effect of killing the enemy "eye to eye" plus the disillusioning reception which the homecoming soldier receives. Many of the utterances in Hauptmann's version seem familiar indeed when compared with some of Hauptmann's earlier writings. Environment and heredity play a dominant role in shaping human fate. The individual is buffeted about by life's cruelty until he acts cruelly out of mere instinct for survival. Thus Hauptmann has Herbert indulge in endless recollections of his horrible war experiences, and the supporting characters likewise refer to those experiences as the real explanation for Herbert's strange behavior, his sudden fits of fear, his persecution complexes, and so on. We can almost see the traditional naturalistic writer saying: take a sensitive and brilliant child, rear him in the sheltered atmosphere of an upper bourgeois, intellectual home; have him study and excel in his work. Then thrust him into this cauldron called war while he is still pliable, young, impressionable, and unstable. The result will *inevitably* be that his mind will crack, his moral fiber be destroyed; his actions will respond to basic, animal instincts of survival and self-assertion. So runs the argument in Hauptmann's play. This *inevitability* of the course of action is the crucial point to watch, because with it left intact, no amount of changing can create a human tragedy out of a merely unfortunate occurrence.

Zuckmayer shapes this tragedy by toning down and partly omitting the frequent references to the formative influences in Herbert's life. First, however, he accentuates this immediate past by creating a tense dramatic incident which shows Herbert losing control of himself to the point of seizing a knife and wielding it while expounding his wild hatred for those who did not fight, those who merely sat in the rear, those who profited from war. Such a tendency to violence fits in with the accumulating references to the murder in his past.

Another significant and typical addition occurs in an utterance of Christa, shortly after this violent scene. A friend of the family inquires about Christa's and Herbert's marriage plans. Christa indicates certain hindrances, which the inquirer interprets as financial worries. Hauptmann has her then answer: "Des Verdienens wegen zögern wir schließ-

lich auch nicht. Er steht nur immer noch auf dem Standpunkt, er könne als kranker Mensch nicht heiraten. Die Kriegsfolgen müßten erst überwunden sein." Zuckmayer adds, after using these words more or less unchanged, the following significant comments: "Es müßte erst alles — überwunden sein. Dabei gibt es doch Tausende, die auch an den Kriegsfolgen leiden, und sich allmählich wieder erholen, vielleicht gerade durch eine Ehe . . . durch ein richtiges Leben. . . . Manchmal — kann ich ihn gar nicht ganz verstehen." What has Zuckmayer done here to adapt the play's argument to his own conception? Instead of *Kriegsfolgen*, he merely says *alles*, leaving the argument open as to where the cause for Herbert's troubles lies. Then he singles Herbert out of the mass of others who also suffered from the war. He is different! Others get over it, normally, in the course of time. There is something personally, individually different about him — he is an individual, not a product of events like thousands of others. And Christa foreshadows for us the play's idea by her reference to the healing influence of marriage, that is, the germinal idea of her sacrifice is here indicated. And her admission that she does not really understand him brings out the uncertainty, the struggling state of his soul.

Three additional examples of shift in interpretation must suffice for a recognition of Zuckmayer's superior treatment.

First, at Herbert's arrest Hauptmann has him leave the stage with the words: "Also kommen Sie jetzt," and the stage direction says: "Im Abgehen beginnt bei ihm wieder das Schütteln." That is Hauptmann's reference to Herbert's "illness," nervous disorder, involuntary, inevitable reaction to excitement. Zuckmayer omits this stage direction, with the result that Herbert leaves not as a man who is still, or again, merely the victim of circumstances, but a man fully awake to his situation, consciously acting in consistency with his earlier "battle" mood. Responsibility lies with him!

Secondly, in the final discussion between Herbert and Christa, Zuckmayer makes a pointed addition, which crystallizes his position. In Hauptmann's version, Herbert explains his deed: "Ich bin nicht allein gewesen, ich weiß es nicht. Sobald man begonnen hat, ist man wahnsinnig." Whereupon Christa exonerates him with the words, ". . . du hast vorher und nachher furchtbar gelitten und alles vor Gott und den Menschen abgebüßt." Zuckmayer however elaborates both positions as follows: ". . . sobald man begonnen hat, ist man im Wahn. Jetzt, erst in dieser Stunde ist der Wahn vergangen." And Christa: "Du warst allein. Du fühltest dich . . . verlassen. Du standest vor dem Abgrund, du wolltest dich wehren, dich retten . . . war es nicht so, Herbert?" Actually, she suggests, without believing, absolution in true Hauptmann fashion. Herbert's answer: ". . . Ich hatte das Leben, den Tod verachtet gelernt. Was war mir ein Mensch — einer unter Mil-

lionen? Ja, ich dachte, was ich vernichte, was ich mir nehme, könne ich tausendfach zurückerstatten. Das war mein Wahn. Jetzt aber weiß ich: jedesmal, wenn ein Mensch stirbt, stirbt Gott. Denn das Leben ist heilig, Christa. Nur das Leben ist heilig. Jedes einzelne Leben auf der Welt. Wer das verletzt, ist gerichtet." There can be no doubt here that Zuckmayer intends to focus the argument upon absolutes, upon permanent values, away from the relativistic *tout comprendre* – *tout pardonner*.

Thus we have to understand the closing words of the drama in their respective forms. Christa, after Herbert's death: "Mutter, du meinst doch nicht, er ist tot?" Which brings her mother's, and thus Hauptmann's answer: "Ja! Und wo je einem Menschen, wird Gott ihm verzeihen, wenn er freiwillig aus dem Leben gegangen ist." Zuckmayer has the mother merely answer: "Er ist im Frieden." Thus he eliminates any "official" pronouncement of absolution wherein, so to speak, God's proxy officiates. Instead, he removes the judgment from the human sphere and suggests the certainty of forgiveness in the overtones of the two words "in peace": peace of mind, peace of soul, peace from men, peace from conscience.

Zuckmayer, the contemporary dramatist, who has given us in one of his latest dramas (*Der Gesang im Feuerofen*) his credo of Christian love, here revises a drama by Hauptmann in such a way, that it can have meaning in our time and stand under his, Zuckmayer's, name. The younger dramatist has brought to life the timebound, temporal drama of his senior.



## MOMENT OF MORAL DECISION: CARL ZUCKMAYER'S LATEST PLAYS

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Since the war three new plays by Carl Zuckmayer have appeared on the German stage and enjoyed considerable success. The first and probably best-known, *Des Teufels General*, was begun in 1942 and completed in 1945. *Der Gesang im Feuerofen* was inspired by a notice in a newspaper in 1948, although the play did not appear until 1950. Both of these dramas deal with the second World War, the first concerning itself with an internal German problem, the second with the problematical issue of the German occupation of France. *Barbara Blomberg*, which appeared in 1949, is both less serious than the previously mentioned plays and more remote from contemporary problems. All three plays represent a new development in Zuckmayer's technique and have in common an even greater emphasis on humanity than that which distinguishes his earlier works. What is new and common to all three plays, but especially the first two mentioned, is the focus upon moral problems. This concentration upon moral considerations has, especially in *Des Teufels General* and *Der Gesang im Feuerofen*, influenced the structure and dramatic technique to a striking degree. This is not to say that the plays are but moralizing sermons, nor should it be inferred that they are *Tendenzdramen* in the service of a particular creed or doctrine. There is in them, however, a new tone that distinguishes them from Zuckmayer's earlier works. Before his exile most of Zuckmayer's works are exuberant and full of the joy of life. The affirmation of life with all its attendant joys and sorrows is still the theme of the novel *Salwäre* (written 1936), in spite of its tragic conclusion. The characters in his post-war plays also have a zest for living, but this is now tempered by the critically evaluating moral basis of his writing. From *Pro Domo* (1938) through the brochures on Mierendorff (1944) and the Grimm brothers (1948) one can observe the emphasis on ethical and humane considerations becoming central in his writings.

This shift of emphasis in Zuckmayer can be demonstrated by an analysis of *Des Teufels General* and *Der Gesang im Feuerofen*. What is striking about both plays is the long exposition. The first act of *Des Teufels General* falls but little short of being half the play. In *Der Gesang im Feuerofen* the expository element is also large. In both plays the attention devoted to detailed and evocative description of the setting is significant. How much Zuckmayer was concerned with evoking a well-rounded picture of Nazi Germany can be observed in the care and detail with which the scenes of the first act of *Des Teufels General* are drawn. The conflicts that make up the plot are developed slowly and

gradually at first, but as the plays progress the tempo increases and the tension mounts until the climax. Both are synthetic plays, but the classical pyramidal scheme set up by Gustav Freytag does not apply to either, since the action ascends in a straight line to a high point at the end. This is true even in *Der Gesang im Feuerofen*, for the scenes after the fire belong as a kind of epilogue to the framework of the play. Both plays culminate in a moment of moral decision, in *Des Teufels General* in Harras' decision to sign the inspection report and shield Oderbruch by his own death, in *Der Gesang im Feuerofen* in the decision of the Maquis to forgive their enemies. Even *Barbara Blomberg* depends on the decision of the heroine to be herself and to conquer or succumb as what she is without pretense or sham. Barbara Blomberg steers her way through a maze of intrigue, plot, and counterplot, and a complex political situation simply by following the dictates of her heart and her feminine intuition. The plot is a little improbable unless one accepts Zuckmayer's thesis that genuine humanity can triumph over intrigue.

This gradual development of the plot and the long and detailed expositions are dictated by the nature of the inner conflicts of the plays. The wealth of piquant scenes in *Des Teufels General*, for example, and the nature of the plots with their obvious political implications and complications should not blind one to the fact that both plays are essentially dramas of inner human conflict which are portraying eternal human conflicts of a significance which transcends their specific German or European setting. Fundamental to both plays is the conflict between loyalty to one's government and the demands of conscience and humane tolerance. The length of the exposition is determined by another factor. As we have mentioned, the plays culminate in a moral decision and are thus constructed with this end in view. But in addition, the action preliminary to the final resolution must be of sufficient length to permit the author to demonstrate both the failure to come to the right decision, that is, to do the humane and moral thing when it is required, and the attempts to evade the decision. Once the issue is joined one must take sides. Harras' failure to come to grips with the problem and to face the necessity of making a decision makes up a large part of the essential or inner action of *Des Teufels General*. In *Der Gesang im Feuerofen* the lines are drawn clearly at an earlier stage, but like *Des Teufels General* the play culminates in a carefully motivated sacrificial death which gives the ultimate meaning to the play. Since it starts with the results of the moral collapse of Louis Creveaux, the question of guilt and retribution is presented at the outset and the necessity of taking sides and making decisions is more insistent from the beginning.

General Harras, the devil's general, is presented at first as a man of robust good conscience, able to make fun of the Nazis, and feeling himself quite above politics. He has great contempt for the Party and

claims to have seen through the Nazis from the first. While reproaching the industrialists for their support of Hitler, he is able to excuse himself by saying that he likes to fly and that flying is the whole content of his life. That this attitude amounts to a fatal inconsistency does not occur to him at first. Yet he is gaining privately and personally from something which his better judgment condemns. He blames his indolence for his continuing to drift along while avoiding facing the real issues. Until late in the play he continues to voice his faith in the basic goodness of life with an optimism little warranted by the circumstances. As his life and career become more and more endangered by the Gestapo — the main part of the outer action — we see him at his bravest and most gallant. The inner action of the play, however, consists in his gradual awakening to the seriousness of his moral position. This awakening takes place in four stages: after learning that Bergmann, a Jew whom he had tried to save, has committed suicide, he gives up his self-deception: "Jeder hat seinen Gewissensjuden, oder mehrere, damit er nachts schlafen kann. Aber damit kauft man sich nicht frei. Das ist Selbstbetrug. An dem, was den tausend anderen geschieht, die wir nicht kennen und denen wir nicht helfen, sind wir deshalb doch schuldig. Schuldig und verdammt, in alle Ewigkeit. Das Gemeine zulassen ist schlimmer, als es tun" (88). With these words the play has reached a turning point. But Harras has not yet come to a course of action, nor is he clear in his own mind that a course of action and not mere insight into the mess around him is necessary. The second stage in his awakening is his interview with Hartmann. In the face of the young man's sincerity and need for guidance Harras finds it difficult to comfort him with phrases and has to satisfy himself and Hartmann with the assurance that there is justice in the world: "Aber glauben Sie mir — es gibt ein Recht. Es gibt einen Ausgleich. Vielleicht nicht für den einzelnen. Vielleicht nicht an der Oberfläche des Lebens — jedoch im Kern. Die Welt nimmt ihren Lauf, das Bestimmte erfüllt sich. Es wird keine Schuld erlassen" (125). A minute before, Harras has paved the way for his own final dramatic act by assuring Hartmann: "Wo aber ein Mensch sich erneuert — da wird die Welt neu geschaffen." At the moment this is said largely just to reassure Hartmann, but the statement is also an assertion of Zuckmayer's own faith. This optimistic faith in the moral course of the world and the comfort that Harras derives from the thought are rudely shaken by the scene that follows immediately afterward.

This scene is the interview with Eilers' widow. Not until now does Harras come to realize his full responsibility. Her accusations he cannot answer, for she has put his guilt in its proper light: "Nichts haben Sie getan. Man tut nichts ohne Glauben. Sie haben nicht geglaubt, woran Eilers glaubte. Und dennoch haben Sie ihn dafür sterben lassen. Sinnlos sterben. Sie haben zugeschaut, und ihn nicht gerettet. Das ist

die Schuld, für die es kein Verzeihen gibt" (127). Lashed by her probing he asks in his despair and in a last evasive attempt to exonerate himself: "Was weiß ein Mensch? Was kann ein Mensch denn wissen?" And: "Wer bin ich denn — daß ich es ändern sollte?" The final breakthrough comes in his conversation with Oderbruch, his closest and most trusted friend, who, he now finds out, is a leader of the resistance to Hitler and willing to sacrifice him in order to continue sabotaging the planes. In his revelation the highpoints of the inner and outer action coincide. For a moment, but a moment only, he is almost ready to betray Oderbruch in order to save himself from the Gestapo. But after Oderbruch has simply and forcefully stated his case Harras makes his decision to shield Oderbruch. At the moment when he asks Oderbruch to help him he has sealed his own doom, but his soul is saved. His life is all that he has left with which to pay his debt: "Wer auf Erden des Teufels General wurde und ihm die Bahn gebombt hat — der muß ihm auch Quartier in der Hölle machen" (136).

Hartmann, an idealistic young flier whose whole education has been shaped by the Nazis, has come through his experience at the front to see into the rottenness of the Nazi regime. One of Harras' last acts is to commend him to Oderbruch. Thus there is in addition to Harras a second character who finds the way to the right. But there remains the problem of Oderbruch, who has never doubted or wavered or gone through any development within the course of the play. From the first he has been sure of his path and secure in the faith that he is right. His certainty and the depth of his conviction guide Harras to his final decision. From what source does Oderbruch draw his certainty? When pressed by Harras to tell what it is that gives him the strength to struggle and suffer almost without hope, he answers: "Es ist das Ewige Recht. . . . Recht ist das unerbittlich waltende Gesetz — dem Geist, Natur und Leben unterworfen sind. Wenn es erfüllt wird — heißt es Freiheit" (135). This is on the surface a secular reply, but it implies a faith in a divine order of the world so constituted that the possibility of justice exists, and so it is understood by Harras, who had confessed his faith in God to Hartmann. Thus, while there is presented no evidence of any particular creed or religion, the atmosphere of the play in its final resolution is religious, and the stern idealism of Oderbruch, although stated in secular terms, is ultimately of a religious nature.

The development of Harras and Hartmann to the point where they can act is accompanied by the presentation of several moral failures. The first act ends with Detlev's excusing himself for his cooperation in spying on Harras. He has no pretty words to justify himself for doing that of which he feels deeply ashamed, but merely succumbs to the pressures brought to bear on him. "Glaubst du, ich mache das gern? Zum Kotzen is mir das. Aber — wat heißt hier Schweinehund. Hierzuland

is jeder sich selbst der Nächste. Ich hab schon 1916 die Neese voll gehabt. Was willste machen, wenn einer daherkommt und hält dir 'ne Ansprache: 'Nun, hören Sie mal zu, Mann. Sie als Kellner haben eine besondere Gelegenheit, dem Staate zu dienen.' — Und schaut dir so eiskalt ins Ooge. Da kannste nicht nein sagen, Mensch. Außerdem hab ich Familie" (65). In a higher social class the manufacturer Mohrungen suffers more articulately and feels acutely the loss of his honor. But he is able to excuse himself in finer language, speaks of his duty, and claims that no one has free will any more but must do what he is forced to do. In both plays Zuckmayer presents all the lazy excuses and all the rationalizations that people are capable of imagining in order to avoid personal responsibility and the necessity of committing themselves.

In *Barbara Blomberg* also the theme of moral evasion is treated. Typical is Ferdinand, who retreats behind the excuse that he is acting under orders (161-2). Barbara Blomberg herself asks her daughter: "Glaubst du, es würde anders in diesem Land, wenn ich anders lebte? Glaubst du, es würde anders — auf der Welt? . . . Glaubst du denn, daß das Elend der Andren geringer wird, wenn du dich selber elend machst?" (143). This, of course, concerns just the message that Zuckmayer wishes to give in his plays, namely that it does matter what the individual does, that it is important for every individual to solve his problems and not shirk his moral duty. For one's life, and if need be one's death, will count and will be remembered. At the climax of *Der Gesang im Feuerofen* Francine asks: "Und was wird bleiben, von unsrer Liebe und unserm Tod? Wer wird Kunde geben, wer trägt unsrer Vermächtnis? Wer wird wissen, wie wir gestorben sind?" From Francis she receives the reply: "Die Steine werden es wissen, die nicht verbrennen können. Die Erde wird Kunde bewahren, die uns überlebt. Die Lüfte werden das Wort von unsren Lippen tragen" (143). "Groß ist die Macht der Toten" is the refrain of the personified elements of Nature in the scene following the burning of the castle.

The inner structure of *Der Gesang im Feuerofen* is similar to that outlined in the discussion above. Again it is a question of steadily rising tension and of an ascending line of action to a climax at the end. As in *Des Teufels General*, Zuckmayer explores the various possibilities of avoiding decision, of blinding oneself to the facts, and of yielding to external forces in spite of one's better judgment. The French gendarme Albert has a classic rationalization of the position of one who is just going along with the prevailing system. "Ich gebe es zu, es ist nicht ganz angenehm, für die Deutschen zu arbeiten. Aber man tut's ja auch für unsrer Land, das keine Wahl hat. Der Befehl kommt von unsrer Regierung, und wir haben ihn auszuführen, sonst nichts" (35). And again: "Das sind Gerüchte, man weiß nicht, was stimmt. Wir sind jedenfalls durch die Befehle unsrer Regierung gedeckt." He sums up

aptly the attitude of those who have morally resigned in the words: "Ich sage, der Zufall regiert die Welt, und einen Gott gibt es keinen. Jeder muß schaun, wie er durchkommt" (85). Earlier we have seen the German Peter agree to spy on Major Mühlstein in a scene reminiscent of the first act of *Des Teufels General*. In the end he deserts and is killed by the Maquis, but such a death, motivated only by the desire to save his own skin, is futile and meaningless. Even Major Mühlstein, in some of his traits reminiscent of General Harras, is an ineffective person in spite of his sympathetic qualities. He too is caught in the system and does not have the courage to break out. He prides himself on being an officer of the old school and a Christian, but although he disapproves of what is going on he does nothing effective to stop it. "Ja, was tun wir dagegen? Wir sind Befehlsempfänger, mein Herr. Allesamt. Eine Welt von Befehlsempfängern" (93). The pathetic figure of Neyroud is typical of the moral confusion that may result from a conflict of loyalties. His son is a leader of the Maquis, yet Neyroud feels that he cannot revolt against the government from which he receives his orders. Thus he acts against the dictates of his conscience until at last he has to face the fact that he has been instrumental in bringing about his son's death. In the midst of this confusion people react either nobly or ignobly, there is no middle ground. Even a mother's sacrifice for her son may not be a noble thing. Just how clearly Zuckmayer is emphasizing the need for the larger humanitarian values to precede even some of the basic ties and loyalties of family is illustrated in the capture of the fugitives attempting to escape over the border. The mother still has brandy and money, although she had sworn she had not when the uncle was in need of them. Her reward for this is that her son turns away from her with revulsion even though she had lied just to save him.

As in *Des Teufels General* there are, however, also positive reactions to the moral dilemmas in which the characters are enmeshed. Sylvester's decision to warn the Maquis is treachery to his own nation, but this underlines again the fact that the interests of humanity take precedence over national loyalty. Like Hartmann of *Des Teufels General*, his experiences at the front have provided him with an understanding of the evils of the Nazi regime. Early in the play he answers the statements of Albert quoted above by saying there is no chance in what happens and that the Germans know what they are doing. Martin too chooses death as the only way out for a German in his position. Yet his death is meaningful, for it is a sacrificial death. Marcel, whose position in the play's inner action corresponds most nearly to the development of General Harras, must also struggle through to the necessary clarity in moral judgments. A fervent patriot, he is on what he considers to be the right side from the beginning. A man of action, his motives are clear and his goals understood and approved by all from the outset. But in

the conversations with Francis it becomes evident that the wish to rid France of the Germans does not justify acts which conflict with the demands of humanity. Marcel is outspokenly irreligious. "Himmel und Hölle sind mir unbekannt. Für mich sind die guten und die bösen Mächte durchaus von dieser Welt, und wenn wir die bösen bekämpfen wollen, brauchen wir klare, direkte Ziele, wie auf dem Schießplatz" (112). Marcel goes on to justify his struggle and his attitude in terms of life on this earth and of tangible goals to be reached this side of heaven. His certainty and conviction and the single-mindedness with which he pursues his aims remind one of Oderbruch. He has not yet learned that love is stronger than hate and that the salvation of the soul is at least as important as the attainment of any worldly ends. Much of his failure to see this stems from the fact that he views the struggle purely as a national one and thinks in terms of French and German rather than in terms of humanity. Francis, in answer to the above quotation, says in part:

Es geht um eine Entscheidung, die schneidet mitten durch alle Völker und alle Menschen hindurch. . . . Wir haben die Wahl zu treffen, hier und heute, ob wir das Leben erniedrigen wollen zu einer blinden Funktion — oder ob wir es lieben können, als Gottes Geschenk, in jedem seiner Geschöpfe, noch im Feind, noch in Tod und Vernichtung. Es muß eine Liebe sein, die stärker brennt als der Haß. . . . Wir haften für dieses Leben mit unsrer Seele, die ein Teil ist vom Wunderbaren, von der geheimen Schönheit und Ordnung, der sie entstammt. Wir sind noch für den Zufall verantwortlich, wenn er mit Steinen wirft — denn es kommt nicht darauf an, was uns trifft, — nur wie wir es bestehn, und was wir uns daraus machen. Das ist die Freiheit, Marcel — die einzige, die allen gemeinsam ist.

Not until later, in face of a death that seems about to render futile all his striving, does Marcel come to an understanding of Francis' point of view and achieve insight into the higher perspective of Francis. Then comes his moment of moral decision as he embraces Sylvester and with this gesture forgives his enemies in the spirit that Francis has desired.

The above analysis overemphasizes the moralizing tendency of the plays in order to illustrate their structure and the course of the inner action. It would not be fair to Zuckmayer's dramatic talent to overlook the fact that both plays abound in exciting, stageworthy action. Good entertainment has been skillfully combined with a serious message. Real, whole people are presented in his plays, not just ideological phantoms. Neither of the plays discussed consists of a conflict of angels with devils, but of men with men, for Zuckmayer's sense of humor and his love of mankind have prevented him from painting in black and white. Although Sprenger in *Der Gesang im Feuerofen* works for the forces of evil, he is not portrayed as a villain but as a man of great

personal courage endowed with some admirable traits. There are no villains in these plays, but only people who are weak or who have chosen the wrong side. It is not party, nor nation, nor religion, nor the cause that makes the ends or means right, but only doing the human, the humane thing that is always right. What Zuckmayer is showing are the fates of men caught up in a system that is so powerful and compelling that one must look deep within one's own conscience to find again the source of humanity and humaneness which can help one to find one's way. Man is not the victim of fate nor of the power of circumstance, but has free will and is responsible for his actions. Under the pressure of a ruthless totalitarian regime some men make the wrong choice, some fail to see that a choice must be made to preserve their integrity and human decency, and some see the evil but are too weak to stand up for the right. Zuckmayer refuses to sit in judgment on these people, for, as he wrote in the pamphlet on Mierendorff: "Deutschland ist schuldig geworden vor der Welt. Wir aber, die wir es nicht verhindern konnten, gehören in diesem großen Weltprozeß nicht unter seine Richter" (39). The same refusal to pass judgment is an essential element of *Der Gesang im Feuerofen*.

The question of right and wrong is not a simple one. But one does have certain criteria. In *Pro Domo* Zuckmayer expresses the belief that one may find the right way by discovering within oneself certain basic and eternal values (86-90, et passim). In *Der Gesang im Feuerofen*, a religiously oriented play, the need for God and His help is more explicit. God's will with men may at times be inscrutable. But some things are known, namely what God does not want. When asked who knows God's will, Barbara Blomberg answers: "Man kennt seinen Willen nicht. Aber es kommt in jedem Leben der Augenblick, in dem man ahnt, was er nicht von uns will" (181). There is no morally justifiable excuse for not knowing at least what is not right. The issues may seem obscure, but it is still possible to find clarity and certainty. Zuckmayer's recent plays are intended as a contribution to this clarity. This is the purpose of drama in our day, for, as he wrote in *Pro Domo*:

Es handelt sich hier um die tiefste Notwendigkeit des dramatischen Schaffens überhaupt: um die nachformende Bannung des Lebens, der Schöpfung, ihrer Zwiespälte und ihrer heimlich bindenden und lösenden Gewalt, um die Darstellung unserer metaphysischen Bestimmtheit, ihres Grauens und ihrer Gnade — um die produktive Überwindung des Chaos, der Zerspaltenheit, der Moira, der Ananke, der dunklen Sphynx-Sprüche unseres Schicksals (76).

## GUSTAV AMBERG, GERMAN-AMERICAN THEATER PROMOTER

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George C. Odell, in his monumental and multi-volumed *Annals of the New York Stage*, writes that during the season of 1889-90 the "new movement" in the theater, typified by Ibsen and his followers in Europe, broke upon New York at the Amberg Theater. There, on Sept. 26-28, 1889, the first American performance in any language of Ibsen's famous *A Doll's House* was given and during the same winter Ibsen's *Pillars of Society*, Björnson's *Fallissement* and Sudermann's *Die Ehre* were also presented.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it is not too much to say that with these presentations the German stage in the United States had reached the apex of its development, and it is not surprising that Zeydel in his "German Theater in New York City" should call Gustav Amberg, the man responsible for this development, "one of the most important figures of the German-American theater."<sup>2</sup> Except perhaps for Heinrich Conried, later impresario of the New York Metropolitan Opera Company, with whom Amberg sometimes was engaged in acrimonious quarrels, he may well have been the most important one. Only two seasons before his introduction of Ibsen and Sudermann he had presented (again quoting Odell) "what is conceded to be the most brilliant sequence of stars and plays ever given in New York in German or perhaps in any other language. Only the best season in the best of New York playhouses could be thought to equal it. Great German actors appeared in the most important plays, classic or others." Among the German players under contract to Amberg during this season of 1887-88 was Ernst Possart, one of the greatest German actors and later director of the Munich Court Theater, during whose engagement the impresario is reported to have taken in the amount of \$140,000, of which \$26,240 are said to have gone to Possart himself (Odell, XIII, p. 475 ff.). Yet Amberg survived these glorious days by more than thirty years, and when he died in 1921, the German stage could barely hold on to a feeble foothold on this continent. He himself had severed all connections with it, and today, again thirty years later, all that is left of his memory are a few casual remarks in books on theater history and a number of clippings in rarely opened library folders.

Amberg arrived in the United States shortly after the end of the Civil War and soon formed a road company of four players, he himself acting as manager, cashier, box office man, orchestra, and prompter. One single time he also appeared as an actor. He admits freely that

<sup>1</sup> Odell, G. C., *Annals of the New York Stage*, Vol. XIV, p. 315, 319, ff.

<sup>2</sup> Zeydel, E. H., "The German Theater in New York City," in *Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter*, Vol. XV, p. 88.

"neither he nor the audience liked this experience and so he never repeated the offense."<sup>3</sup> But his taste for the theater remained with him and soon he assumed his first position as manager of a reasonably well-established stage, the German Theater or "Stadttheater an der Rivardstraße" in Detroit. The few announcements extant give a clear intimation of the methods which Amberg later so successfully applied in New York. For Sunday, December 12, 1869, he announced the second guest appearance of Ottlie Genée, who later became prominent as the guiding spirit of the German stage on the West Coast, and six weeks later he advertised the first guest appearance of Frau Mina Ostermann and Gustav Ostermann, "Direktor des Stadttheaters in New Orleans" (*Michigan Volksblatt*, Dec. 10, 1869; Jan. 26, 1870). Here we see the seeds of the star system that led him later to import whole galaxies of famous players from Europe. He did not stay long in Detroit. After traveling through the Middle West, he appeared in St. Paul with four players, just in time to revive the moribund German stage. Within a few weeks after Amberg's coming it flourished as it had never flourished before, and during his two years with the *Athenäum* stage in St. Paul he abundantly demonstrated those qualities of ambition, energy, and resourcefulness which characterized his later activity in New York. In his presentations he leaned heavily on visiting actors. After the members of his original group had departed, he imported guests from Eastern cities. Emil Lasswitz, Mme. Wagner-Märtens, the Döbelins, and last but not least, Mme. Methua-Scheller appeared in St. Paul. All of them were well-known actors and actresses in their day, especially Mme. Methua-Scheller, who had triumphantly played on New York stages before coming West. In addition Amberg had the knack of making the local amateurs cooperate with him, which in itself was an accomplishment. They even accompanied him to other Minnesota cities such as Minneapolis, Stillwater, Mankato, and New Ulm. He did not restrict his activities to the legitimate stage only. When the Fabbri-Mulders Opera Company appeared in St. Paul, Amberg persuaded its members to make two unscheduled appearances in the *Athenäum*, where they offered ensemble selections from Verdi's *Il Trovatore* and *Rigoletto*, Weber's *Freischütz*, and Wagner's *Rienzi*. In 1874 he presented the Franosch Opera Company to Minneapolis audiences in the first two operas sung there in the German language, *Il Trovatore* and Flotow's *Martha*.

Even at this early period his flair for obtaining favorable publicity was well developed. On one occasion he gave one performance free of charge as a reward for the public's faithful attendance on previous Sundays. The constant scheduling of Sunday performances was in itself

<sup>3</sup> *New York Sun*, Jan. 29, 1911. These references to New York English-language newspapers were taken from clippings preserved in the theater collection of the New York Public Library.

his most daring innovation, for only with his coming to St. Paul did even the Germans in their own playhouses dare to play openly and regularly on Sundays without disguising their stage offerings as "Sacred Concerts." Finally he brought the Royal Bavarian Military Band to the St. Paul Grand Opera House, which up to this time had been "an abode of darkness and emptiness on Sunday." Thus the downfall of the blue laws in St. Paul was definitely accomplished. Amberg's boldness will be understood only if one realizes how bitterly German and Puritan elements were arrayed against each other in the question of Sabbath laws. It is perhaps not too much to say that the gradual easing of Sabbath laws in the United States represents the only instance in which customs brought along by German immigrants remained victorious over older American traditions. Amberg was the man who accomplished this victory in St. Paul.

At this time, however, he was actually no longer connected with the German theater there. He had found the German stage too small for his energy and had taken over the much bigger field of managing the St. Paul Grand Opera House. Even this extension of his activity proved too small for him. He inevitably came to the conclusion that the proper field for a man of his energy and intelligence was the metropolis. After a visit to his home town of Prague in 1876 he stayed in New York.<sup>4</sup>

By the time the season of 1878-79 rolled around Amberg was able to make his first imprint upon German theatrical life in the big city by giving several successful performances in the Terrace Garden Theater (Zeydel, p. 260 ff.). But his first really triumphant year was the season 1879-80 when the Old Bowery Theater, home of English plays since 1826, became a fastness of German art. Jointly with such famous characters in German-American theater history as William Kramer, Mathilde Cotrelly, and Heinrich Conried, Amberg converted the Old Bowery into the Thalia Theater and immediately made theatrical, or shall we say, operatic history by presenting *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss for the first time on an American stage (Odell, XII, p. 73). This was on October 18, 1879, ten years after his apprenticeship in Detroit and four years after this operetta was first heard by the Viennese public. Operettas at this time were the rage the world over and the new Thalia concentrated on them, yet Anzengruber's *Pfarrer von Kirchfeld*, Schiller's *Räuber*, *Maria Stuart*, and *Jungfrau von Orleans*, Kleist's *Käthchen von Heilbronn*, and Grillparzer's *Medea* were also produced (Zeydel, pp. 260 ff.). The season was an extraordinary success, for the Thalia with its seating capacity of over two thousand was one of the largest playhouses in the United States.

<sup>4</sup> The details concerning Amberg's activities in Minnesota are taken from various issues of *Minnesota Staatszeitung*, *Minnesota Volksblatt*, *Minneapolis Freie Presse*, and *New Ulm Post*, appearing between 1871 and 1876.

Indeed, the whole decade from 1880 to 1890 was a highly successful one for Amberg. It was dotted with artistic successes, engagements of stars, trips through the United States and Europe, and finally culminated in the building of the Amberg Theater at Irving Place and Thirteenth Street, which became the birthplace of the "new movement" in America.

One of the stars whom Amberg at this time introduced to the United States was Marie Geistinger, who excelled both as an actress and as a singer. He always was of the opinion that she probably was the greatest feminine star he ever had under his management. At one time she and the famous actress Sarah Bernhardt played the role of Camille on one and the same evening in two different New York theaters, "each drawing a tremendous house and tremendous applause," as Amberg later reminisced.<sup>5</sup> He had early begun the innovation of not limiting his advertisements to German newspapers and so had gradually brought to his theater a sturdy patronage of art lovers who did not know German at all (*New York Times*, May 24, 1921).

In 1882 Amberg organized a traveling operatic company with Marie Geistinger as his star and traveled the length and breadth of the United States, winning many a triumph in places as far apart as Chicago, San Francisco, and Texas.<sup>6</sup> Returning to the Thalia the following year he really concentrated upon the importation of great players from German-speaking countries. Within a few years he brought over such famous actors and actresses as Kathi Schratt from Vienna, friend of Emperor Franz Joseph; Sonnenthal, Barnay, Mitterwurzer, Possart, Emil Thomas and his wife Betty Dannhofer-Thomas, Kainz, and Alexander Strakosch, together with others only slightly less famous in German theatrical annals. These engagements naturally required frequent trips across the ocean. At one time the impresario had just arrived in Berlin when he was visited by a sheriff's assistant who confiscated twenty-two thousand marks Amberg had with him. Apparently the action was the result of a lawsuit against him in New York (*New Ulm Post*, August 21, 1885). One man with whom Amberg was involved in many lawsuits was his former colleague, later competitor and successor Heinrich Conried,<sup>7</sup> like himself a native of Bohemia.

It does seem that Amberg during his heyday grew accustomed to dealing with large amounts of money. At one time he claimed that his salary list was the largest of any theater in New York (*Dramatic Mirror*, New York, Oct. 10, 1891). If his memory was correct, he paid Sonnenthal one thousand dollars per evening at the Thalia, and altogether seven-

<sup>5</sup> Undated clipping in New York Public Library Theater Collection.

<sup>6</sup> Olson, Esther Marie, "The German Theater in Chicago," in *Deutsch-Amerikanische Geschichtsblätter*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 96; *The Life of Daniel Belasco*, by William Winter, Vol. 1, p. 251 (New York, 1918).

<sup>7</sup> Montrose Moses, *Life of Heinrich Conried*, p. 41 (New York, 1916).

teen thousand dollars plus expenses for one engagement. Kainz got six hundred dollars for each performance, and he was satisfied with this "low" amount only because he was boycotted in Germany for breach of contract (*New York Globe*, May 12, 1912).

For a time during the middle of the eighties Amberg specialized in musical comedies and operettas. He not only presented his singers at the Thalia, but took his New York Thalia German Opera Company on the road, to Chicago, the Twin Cities, and other cities of the Middle West. Among the operettas offered was *Die Fledermaus*, but Amberg also presented full-fledged operas such as Massenet's *Manon*, which thanks to Amberg thus reached the interior of America only three years after its first performance in Paris (*St. Paul Volkszeitung*, Feb. 22, 1887). All performances were given in German.

After his return to New York he entered upon his best and also upon his last year at the Thalia — the season which Odell calls perhaps the best theater season any New York theater ever experienced. Great German actors appeared in the most important German plays, classic or romantic (Odell, XIII, p. 475), and also in several Shakespearean dramas. Among the plays given in German by the famous trio of Ludwig Barnay, Ernst Possart, and Gertrud Giers were *The Merchant of Venice*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Nathan der Weise*, *Maria Stuart*, *Don Carlos*, *Kabale und Liebe*, and *Egmont*. During one week early in April of 1888, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *Uriel Acosta* were presented by the following cast of stars: Barnay as Othello, Possart as Iago, Gertrud Giers as Emilia; Barnay as Hamlet, Possart as Polonius, Gertrud Giers as the Queen; Barnay as Uriel Acosta, Possart as Ben Akiba, Giers as Judith (Odell, XIV, pp. 83 and 90). These players acting together in New York were the very cream of the acting profession in German lands. It must have been a glorious time for German theater-goers in New York — and not only for them, for it was estimated that thirty to forty percent of the people attending Amberg's offerings were of non-German background.<sup>8</sup>

Amberg had now reached the point where he could carry out a dream of long standing. He built a theater of his own at Irving Place and Thirteenth Street, appropriately called the Amberg Theater, and opened it on December 1, 1888. The audience, which included Mayor Hewitt, filled the house to overflowing when the curtain rose on a play entitled, again appropriately, *Ein Erfolg*.

It was in the new Amberg Theater, still standing today, even though in a dilapidated condition and alienated from its original purposes, that the new naturalistic dramatic movement first found a hospitable foothold in the new world. There, on September 26, 1889, Ibsen's

<sup>8</sup> Newspaper clipping of unknown origin and date in N. Y. P. L. Article appeared in 1890.

*A Doll's House* was first presented. It was reviewed enthusiastically by the theater critic of *The New York Herald*, who praised highly both the dramatic power of the play and the excellent acting. On December 26, Possart, on his second trip to the United States, was presented in Ibsen's *Pillars of Society* (Odell, XIV, pp. 315, 319 ff.), and during this same season he appeared twenty-three times in Sudermann's *Die Ehre* (Zeydel, p. 260 ff.). Still somewhat later Amberg also offered performances of *Der Zigeunerbaron* and *Die Fledermaus* to the delight of his audiences. He must have considered himself a very successful man indeed when on May 17, 1890, a banquet was given in his honor at which William Steinway presided. Among the people sponsoring this banquet were Oswald Ottendorfer, editor of the *New York Staatszeitung*; Carl Schurz, former Secretary of the Interior; Jacob Schiff, banker; and Henry Villard, former journalist and railroad president.<sup>9</sup>

Judging by photographs extant, Amberg at this time looked not unlike Napoleon III, especially because of the type of beard he wore. He was described as an active little man of slender build, with iron grey hair and beard, and a quick and nervous speech and manner. "There are few managers in any country who have as wide an acquaintance with the stage and its literature," said Ali Baba in the *Dramatic Mirror* of October 19, 1891.

To this same reporter Amberg talked at length on the difference between American and German stage managers. The former, according to him, cared for big effects only, the latter wanted to be as perfect as possible in every single way. "The proper exit of an actor is of greater importance in my eyes than the most effective stained glass window," said he. Every day during the entire season he insisted on two rehearsals. The actors might not like it, but they had to comply. Amberg was proud of being strict on the stage. In spite of this, as another report pointed out later, he was able to keep the rarest thing for a manager to have — not only the respect but the affectionate regard of the people he dealt with (*New York Globe*, May 2, 1912).

Amberg, of course, always was confronted by the fact that the number of people permanently interested in the German drama was limited. He himself said that even though the resident German population of New York was large, only fifteen to twenty thousand of them constituted the theater-going portion. To hold them, any German manager had to keep putting on new pieces, simply because these fifteen thousand people soon had seen the new play and wanted something else. This was the reason, he said, why he had to produce more plays in one season than any other manager in the country in ten seasons. This also was the reason why the scenery in his theater was often criticized as shabby and inadequate. But he professed not to be bothered by this

<sup>9</sup> Newspaper clipping of unknown origin and date in N. Y. P. L.

detail, "because a clever stage manager can do wonders with the oldest scenery." (*Dramatic Mirror*, October 10, 1891).

Peculiarly enough, however, at the time when he was making these statements he must have known that the tide was swiftly running against him. Even the season of 1890-91, following the great testimonial banquet, no longer proved profitable, though Amberg had brought over the *Münchener Bauernensemble* for seventy-two performances. A group of Low-German actors proved a great failure (Zeydel, pp. 260 ff.). He had also imported many new plays from Germany, without being able to save himself financially. This he attributed to "the lack of new plays — good new plays," although on March 27, 1891, he produced Ibsen's *Ghosts* for the first time in America. Amberg apparently could not see, or would not admit, that he presented good new plays, but that the public was not yet ready to accept them. "The new drama of Ibsen, Hauptmann, even Sudermann and Fulda was not yet wholly acceptable to the Germans of New York," and the old school of plays had lost its attraction. Amberg suffered a fate not unusual for pioneers and innovators. His creditors met and he was adjudged bankrupt (Odell, XIV, p. 603).

However, he remained at the Amberg Theater for one more year as an assistant manager, presenting such plays as *Hedda Gabler* and *An Enemy of the People* as well as Grillparzer's *Die Jüdin von Toledo*, and introducing Joseph Kainz as "a truly handsome Romeo" and Adalbert Matkowsky "with a truly imposing repertoire." Amberg, in spite of all setbacks, had by no means lost his indomitable spirit and enterprise. Yet this season of 1891-92 was his last one at the theater, and soon even his name disappeared from the playhouse he had built. Henceforth it was called the Irving Place Theater and as such managed by Amberg's old adversary, Heinrich Conried, who led the German drama to new heights. Amberg himself passed over to the English-language field and in 1897 even reversed his former procedure by taking an American actress, the beautiful Lillian Russell, to Germany (*New York Sun*, Jan. 29, 1911).

For a number of years after this, Amberg was the foreign representative of the Shubert Brothers theater chain. In this capacity he resided in Berlin, acquiring the rights to many great dramatic and musical successes which were adapted and presented in New York and throughout the country (*New York Review*, March 13, 1912).

Yet his desire to present German plays in New York had not completely deserted him, and in 1911 he not only became a German impresario again, but he actually returned to the theater he himself had founded — the former Amberg Theater, now the Irving Place Theater, which he had been forced to leave twenty years earlier.

First, to be sure, he made his reappearance at the Garden Theater,

there presenting an actor whom he had triumphantly introduced twenty-five years earlier, Ernst Possart, now Ernst von Possart, who had been ennobled for his achievements in the field of dramatic art. His appearance was a great artistic and financial success. Amberg "still remained the charming, genial personality he always was. The years had not abated his energy and zeal in the slightest" (*Musical America*, November 4, 1911). This energy led him to engage an operatic troupe and even to take over the management of the Irving Place Theater again, contrary to his better judgment, as he later said. For in spite of the fact that in the season of 1910-11 he presented many operettas there, introduced the dramatic works of Karl Schönherr to this country, and even imported a troupe of peasant actors from Oberammergau, he could not make ends meet and lost everything he had made during the previous season with von Possart. The reasons which he gave both before and after this last season illustrate the decline of the German stage in the United States very well and also show clearly that even without the coming of the first World War, German cultural life in America would gradually have disappeared.

Even while Possart was still playing at the Garden Theater, Amberg "shook his head as he discussed the future of the German theater in America" (*New York Sun*, Jan. 29, 1911). He was of the opinion that a German theater as such could be run successfully in New York not more than three months in the year. "And I take New York to be typical of the larger cities in the United States," he said. "One of the reasons for this is that the German population is scattered now. It is no longer focused about this locality as it once was, and the American-born Germans prefer the American drama, except when some great star such as von Possart is to be seen." It was his belief that the rising generation of German-Americans preferred American theaters and opera houses because the productions, if not always so good artistically, were superior from a spectacular point of view. And last but not least: "The Germans do not immigrate as much as they used to do" (*Musical America*, Feb. 4, 1911).

When he realized that his season of 1911-12 had ended in failure he was not surprised. He shook his head again and said, "I should have known better . . . When different people came to me and begged me to take over the management of the Irving Place Theater I told them: 'What I need is to go to the cemetery and revive all the Germans who are buried there and who used to crowd the Thalia for me. That is what the German theater in New York lacks.'" (*New York Globe*, May 2, 1912). He may have derived some comfort from hearing himself praised highly at this time. "He has done work of inestimable value," said Louis Sherwin in the *Globe* (May 2, 1912). "He has played the pioneer more than once, only to have somebody else come

along and reap the profits. At a time when the American stage was the despair of all intelligent people, the German theater in New York . . . was their only refuge from cheap sentimentality and vulgarity. It used to be the one playhouse where you could nearly always depend upon seeing plays fit for a grownup mind and acted by artists who knew their craft. At the time when the average American manager was a laughing stock for his superb ignorance, his bomb-proof armor of illiterate indifference, Gustav Amberg was one of the few who combined business sense with artistic sensibilities . . . He has made several fortunes and has lost them . . . He has played the sportsman all the time."

A few days after this tribute he was honored by a benefit at the Casino, at which such stars as George Cohan, Weber and Fields, Eddy Foy, and Al Jolson volunteered to appear (*New York Review*, April 13, 1912). Then Amberg withdrew again from the German theater field, spending his remaining years in the employ of Shubert Brothers, for whom he studied the European market and procured plays suitable for performance in America. Early in May, 1921, he died at the age of seventy-seven, surviving the days of his greatest glory by over thirty years (*New York Times*, May 24, 1921). Although he had been married twice, he left no relatives in this country. When he died, only a weak afterglow of the German-American theater's former glory remained. Today both this glory and Gustav Amberg's memory are practically forgotten.



## ERICH KÄSTNER AND SOCIAL CRITICISM<sup>1</sup>

JOHN WINKELMAN

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Just as it has been the fate of Heine to be known more for the romantic side of his creative activity than for the mordant social criticism and satire of such poems as *Deutschland, ein Winternärrchen*, and just as even Jonathan Swift is sometimes thought of as the author of amusing works, so too Erich Kästner, an outstanding social critic of Weimar Germany, is in some danger of being eclipsed by Erich Kästner, the author of *Emil und die Detektive*, — perhaps because one tends to notice and remember the pleasant and to disregard and forget the unpleasant. In five pre-Hitler volumes of lyric poetry<sup>2</sup> and one novel, Kästner has given us, among other things, an invaluable comprehensive portrait of German society in the late period of the republic — a contemporary eye-witness account of civilization crumbling — accompanied by an insistent underlining of almost all the major issues of that day and of the modern age in general. It is not a dilettante or a superficial critique. As a highly educated man and as a journalist trained in sociological commentary, he creates social criticism worthy of a sociologist, an economist, or a political scientist, as well as that of a cultural philosopher, a moralist, and a sensitive poet. The precision and truth of his critique balance and justify the often vitriolic style.

The present paper allows time for brief comments, necessarily suggestive rather than complete, first on Kästner's point of view as a social critic, secondly his method in exercising social criticism, and finally the positive message which supplements the merely critical side of his work. Taken together, these three aspects will roughly define the figure of the man and his work.

"Point of view" is of course a concept independent of "style" or "technique." The vehemence of Kästner's denunciation is therefore beside the point here; all that matters in this connection is the base of his satire. Kästner's point of view may be called very loosely "left," less loosely "liberal," and more precisely "small-enterprise capitalist." He is in essence a man of the eighteenth century — his doctoral dissertation, for example, dealt with that period — who, though speaking in flawless twentieth-century idiom, nevertheless criticizes the modern period in terms of an earlier period of development. This is not to be confused with escapism. The classical, moderate period of capitalism serves him

<sup>1</sup> A paper read before the German section of the Central States Modern Language Teachers Association in St. Louis, May 3, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Including the volume *Doktor Erich Kästners lyrische Hausapotheke* (Basle and Prague, 1936), which is of a piece with the pre-Hitler volumes *Herz auf Taille* (1928), *Lärm im Spiegel* (1929), *Ein Mann gibt Auskunft* (1930), and *Gesang zwischen den Stühlen* (1932).

as a norm; he attacks, not by any means capitalism as such, but the aberrations of modern large-scale industrial and financial capitalism together with the resulting social situation. His point of view is entirely middle-class and hence inherently archaic. Aside from the fact that Kästner gives primacy to moral renascence rather than to legal reform, the words of his character Stephan Labude in the novel *Fabian, die Geschichte eines Moralisten* (1931) adequately illustrate the legal and material basis of Kästner's implied utopia. Labude, a young would-be reformer, thus in part summarizes a speech he has made to a gathering of his fellow-students:

... es sei unsere Aufgabe, den Kontinent zu reformieren: durch internationale Abkommen, durch freiwillige Kürzung des privaten Profits, durch Zurückschraubung des Kapitalismus und der Technik auf ihre vernünftigen Maße, durch Steigerung der sozialen Leistungen, durch kulturelle Vertiefung der Erziehung und des Unterrichts. Ich sagte, diese neue Front, diese Querverbindung der Klassen, sei möglich, da die Jugend, wenig ~~an~~ ihre Elite, den hemmungslosen Egoismus verabscheue und außerdem klug genug sei, eine Zurückführung in organische Zustände einem unvermeidlichen Zusammenbruch des Systems vorzuziehen.

Kästner's home environment already predisposed him to this attitude, for his father was in early life an independent harness-maker but later, before the birth of his son, became a skilled worker in a luggage factory. In other words, there was here exemplified close at hand the atrophy of the middle class, a universal decadent phenomenon of modern capitalist civilization which in Germany was so immensely accelerated by the inflation and other postwar factors. Criticizing from a middle-class point of view, Kästner was enabled to reveal the decadent situation which was shortly to culminate in Hitler as primarily a crisis of the middle class and then to pursue this crisis through all its political, economic, social, and cultural manifestations. This is the basic reason for the inherent broad truth and sufficiency of his critique.

Secondly, we come to Kästner's method as a social critic. The method in the lyric poems consists partly in a radical shift of the locus of the lyricism. Breaking entirely with the Goethean confessional tradition, Kästner creates lyric poems which no longer purport to be an expression of the poet's private emotional or spiritual experience. He aims to express the age, as incorporated in himself. He is the voice of the inarticulate masses. In keeping with this purpose, he presents lyrically, as if from within, objective social situations. He writes the poem which his fellow-man might write, had he the ability. As a typical example, we may take the poem "Kurt Schmidt, statt einer Ballade," from *Ein Mann gibt Auskunft*.

## KURT SCHMIDT, STATT EINER BALLADE

Der Mann, von dem im weiteren Verlauf  
die Rede ist, hieß Schmidt (Kurt Schm., komplett).  
Er stand, nur sonntags nicht, früh 6 Uhr auf  
und ging allabendlich Punkt 8 zu Bett.

10 Stunden lag er stumm und ohne Blick.  
4 Stunden brauchte er für Fahrt und Essen.  
9 Stunden stand er in der Glasfabrik.  
1 Stündchen blieb für höhere Interessen.

Nur sonn- und feiertags schlief er sich satt.  
Danach rasierte er sich, bis es brannte.  
Dann tanzte er. In Sälen vor der Stadt.  
Und fremde Fräuleins wurden rasch Bekannte.

Am Montag fing die nächste Strophe an.  
Und war doch immerzu dasselbe Lied!  
Ein Jahr starb ab. Ein andres Jahr begann.  
Und was auch kam, nie kam ein Unterschied.

Um diese Zeit war Schmidt noch gut verpackt.  
Er träumte nachts manchmal von fernen Ländern.  
Um diese Zeit hielt Schmidt noch halbwegs Takt.  
Und dachte: Morgen kann sich alles ändern.

Da schnitt er sich den Daumen von der Hand.  
Ein Frl. Brandt gebar ihm einen Sohn.  
Das Kind ging ein. Trotz Pflege auf dem Land.  
(Schmidt hatte 40 Mark als Wochenlohn.)

Die Zeit marschierte wie ein Grenadier.  
In gleichem Schritt und Tritt. Und Schmidt lief mit.  
Die Zeit verging. Und Schmidt verging mit ihr.  
Er merkte eines Tages, daß er litt.

Er merkte, daß er nicht alleine stand.  
Und daß er doch allein stand, bei Gefahren.  
Und auf dem Globus, sah er, lag kein Land,  
in dem die Schmidts nicht in der Mehrzahl waren.

So war's. Er hatte sich bis jetzt geirrt.  
So war's, und es stand fest, daß es so blieb.  
Und er begriff, daß es nie anders wird.  
Und was er hoffte, rann ihm durch ein Sieb.

Der Mensch war auch bloß eine Art Gemüse,  
das sich und dadurch andere ernährt.  
Die Seele saß nicht in der Zirbeldrüse.  
Falls sie vorhanden war, war sie nichts wert.

9 Stunden stand Schmidt schwitzend im Betrieb.  
4 Stunden fuhr und aß er, müd und dumm.  
10 Stunden lag er, ohne Blick und stumm.  
Und in dem Stündchen, das ihm übrigblieb,  
brach er sich um.

It will be observed, in the first place, that the greater part of this poem is, when regarded superficially, not lyric at all, but narrative. The narrative function is kept very much in the foreground by the studiously flat diction and tone. "Der Mann, von dem im weiteren Verlauf die Rede ist, hieß Schmidt" is, if taken out of the total context, a prose

sentence made up of the prosiest words imaginable. To be sure, the grotesquely exaggerated prosiness is symbolic of the prosy life depicted, and therefore takes on a poetic function. But a surface appearance of ordinary narration is maintained until the penultimate stanza:

Der Mensch war auch bloß eine Art Gemüse,  
das sich und dadurch andere ernährt.  
Die Seele saß nicht in der Zirbeldrüse.  
Falls sie vorhanden war, war sie nichts wert.

Here there is suddenly a muted, melancholy lyricism. But in this stanza, alone of the entire poem, it is Kurt Schmidt who speaks, not Kästner. The rest of the poem serves to create Kurt Schmidt and build up to his inner utterance, which Kästner merely helps him to formulate and express: an utterance of nihilism, but — here its saving feature — a bitter nihilism, a rebellious nihilism, a nihilism that is a hunger.

But who is Kurt Schmidt? He is man in the machine age, a tragic-comic Charlie Chaplin figure, man dwarfed and oppressed by the social situation in which he is inextricably enmeshed, which exacts from him  $10 + 4 + 9$  out of every 24 hours. And what is the poem? It is not a plea for shorter working hours or higher pay; it rises far above that. It rises above the entire question of capitalist ownership to criticize the machine age as such, under whatever conditions of ownership. It is a radical critique of the whole soul-killing situation of the late machine age.

It is obvious that this method of a transposed lyricism is an important innovation poetically as well. Kästner's poems never fall into the pitfall of so much modern poetry, which fails to transcend anguished and in the last analysis undigested introspection, to become what poetry should be, namely communication. Kästner's poetry is disciplined by a fundamentally social principle and is therefore always communication. As he himself puts it: "Im Widerspruch mit dem eigenen Bedürfnis enthielt ich mich regelmäßig jeder Publikation, die nichts weiter gewesen wäre als die Bekanntgabe persönlicher Stimmungen und Einsichten."

We come now to the final subject, Kästner's positive message. Aside from the numerous concrete positive suggestions, expressed or implied, which the poems contain, there is one major underlying message. This is an existentialist effort to rescue the Individual, to shock the Kurt Schmidts into a different sort of self-awareness, into a new sense of responsibility, or, to use the technical word, "involvement." The Individual, in the sense of an integrated, responsible agent possessing identity, initiative, and a sense of communion, is in great danger, Kästner rightly feels, of being lost and replaced by the mass-man. This theme has its ramifications in very many of the poems, not to mention *Fabian*. Sometimes, as in "Der Traum vom Gesichtertausch," it appears on a metaphysical plane; sometimes, as in "Ein Mann gibt Auskunft," it is poignantly social; in the form of a dramatic challenge, a Kierkegaardian either-or, we find it clearly in "Und wo bleibt das Positive, Herr Käst-

ner?" On perhaps the most personal level it is found in "Nächtliches Rezept für Städter," which is an effort to restore the sense of communion in society.

### NÄCHTLICHES REZEPT FÜR STÄDTER

Man nehme irgendeinen Autobus.  
Es kann nicht schaden, einmal umzusteigen.  
Wohin, ist gleich. Das wird sich dann schon zeigen.  
Doch man beachte, daß es Nacht sein muß.

In einer Gegend, die man niemals sah  
(das ist entscheidend für dergleichen Fälle),  
verlasse man den Autobus und stelle  
sich in die Finsternis. Und warte da.

Man nehme allem, was zu sehn ist, Maß.  
Den Toren, Giebeln, Bäumen und Balkonen,  
den Häusern und den Menschen, die drin wohnen.  
Und glaube nicht, man täte es zum Spaß.

Dann gehe man durch Straßen. Kreuz und quer.  
Und folge keinem vorgefaßten Ziele.  
Es gibt so viele Straßen, ach so viele!  
Und hinter jeder Biegung sind es mehr.

Man nehme sich bei dem Spaziergang Zeit.  
Er dient gewissermaßen höhern Zwecken.  
Er soll das, was vergessen wurde, wecken.  
Nach zirka einer Stunde ist's soweit.

Dann wird es sein, als liefe man ein Jahr  
durch diese Straßen, die kein Ende nehmen.  
Und man beginnt, sich seiner selbst zu schämen  
und seines Herzens, das verfettet war.

Nun weiß man wieder, was man wissen muß,  
statt daß man in Zufriedenheit erblindet:  
daß man sich in der Minderheit befindet!  
Dann nehme man den letzten Autobus,  
bevor er in der Dunkelheit verschwindet . . .

The poem, like Kästner's poems generally, is unpretentious, even convincingly so. Eschewing, as always, the hackneyed pose of a humorless Olympianism, he creates here, notwithstanding E. T. A. Hoffmann overtones of an infinite horror, a pleasing, humorous, and witty poem, colloquial in diction and tone. He calls it a "recipe" and instructs the reader to "take" various common things as ingredients. But what is to come about in the reader as a result of this "recipe"? An existential experience, an *Erlebnis* which anyone can create for himself from the materials of his everyday world by following directions closely, an experience which will instill a new and necessary sense of self in relation to society.

This existentialist message and position, the logical outcome of a consistent middle-class orientation in the age of crisis, is really fundamental to the whole of Kästner's work. Even the "transposed lyricism" spoken of earlier is part and parcel of it, for this style signifies in essence

the voluntary acceptance of a principle of ethical responsibility as the primary esthetic principle. It is the paradoxical consequence of this discipline, which seems to submerge the poet's individuality, that ultimately the work culminates in the man. The man standing invisible behind the poems is almost physically there. Without aiming at any such thing, Kästner creates in his own person an existentialist symbol of a man who cares enough about himself to care for society more.

As I said before, in this short paper it is possible to give only a rough idea of some major defining points concerning Kästner as a serious poet, that is, as a social critic. I hope that in the future some of his poems will be as commonly used in advanced classes as his *Emil und die Detektive* is now used in elementary classes. For, as I hope is clear from the examples I have used, Kästner is a very exportable poet, a type of which there are not many examples in Germany or, for that matter, in other countries either. He comes to grips with modern social problems in a manner which can be appreciated by the man in the street, not dropping bombs from a great height but engaging in hand-to-hand combat with modern problems. Everyone living in the twentieth century — in other words, all who live in or have lived in a large city — will find that these poems strike home in a unique manner. For once, a love of poetry does not presuppose an antiquarian interest or an unbecoming attitude of timeless detachment. The typical native of St. Louis, or Chicago, or New York, for example, who goes about in his protective shell, merely glancing at his human environment or appraising it from a commercial standpoint, but never really looking at it from a human, that is an existentialist viewpoint, will find himself strangely affected and convinced by "Nächtliches Rezept für Städter." Every reader will appreciate the dead serious meaning behind these apparently light poems — that every one, including himself, has a social responsibility that he cannot completely discharge by being law-abiding, by voting intelligently, by being enlightened, but only by being *engagé*. If poetry, if any art form really has an ethical efficacy, as Schiller thought, then it must itself be *engagé* as these poems are; it must reach into the heart of the ordinary man. That Kästner even attempted to be thus *engagé* makes him worthy of our attention and respect; but that he succeeded so well makes him worthy of our most serious study and propagation.

## NEWS AND NOTES

**SPECIAL MLA MEETING.** The Modern Language Association in the September issue of *PMLA* announces a new undertaking of vital interest to all teachers of foreign languages in America, the main purpose of which is to study the reasons for hostility or indifference to foreign language study and to devise effective means of combatting this hostility and indifference. A grant of \$120,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation will support the investigation over a three-year period. On the morning of Sunday, December 28, 1952, from 10:30 to 12:30, in the Ballroom of the Hotel Statler in Boston, the new program will be presented to the Association and its friends in a special General Meeting. Speakers will be Hayward Keniston, Henri Peyre, B. Q. Morgan, Albert Marckwardt, and Donald Walsh. All members of the various AAT groups, whether members of the MLA or not, are especially invited to this important session.

**GERMAN STUDY TOUR.** For the third year, the Department of Germanic Languages of the University of Washington will sponsor a four-week study program at the University of Munich. The approximate dates will be July 20 to September 1, 1953. Credits, granted by registration in the University of Washington Summer term, may be obtained in German conversation, reading, and literature at the intermediate, advanced, and possibly elementary levels. Some previous knowledge of German is desirable. The cost of the trip will be \$650, plus \$37.50 for those who wish University of Washington credits. Because of scarcity of steamship space, very early registration is advised. For further information, write to Professor W. H. Rey, 113 Denny Hall, University of Washington, Seattle 5, Washington.

**VORTRAG FRIDERIKE ZWEIG.** Die Dichterin Friderike Maria Zweig-Winternitz hielt am 23. November vor der Studentenschaft des Clark College im Atlanta University Center, Atlanta, Georgia, einen Vortrag unter dem Titel "Let Culture Prevail." Das Werk und die Persönlichkeit der Vortragenden, die am 4. Dezember ihren siebzigsten Geburtstag feiert, wurde am 24. Oktober den Studenten in einer Befreiung des Buches *Stefan Zweig: ein Briefwechsel* durch Dr. Robert Rie, Professor am Clark College, erklärt.

**LANGUAGES IN THE GRADES.** An article in the *Christian Science Monitor* for October 9, 1952, reports great progress in the introduction of language teaching into elementary schools in the East. Cities involved include York, Pennsylvania; Fairfield and Plainville, Connecticut; Andover, Massachusetts; and Sommerville, New Jersey, where the elementary school language program is in its fourth year. Children, parents, and teachers are all reported to be enthusiastic about the new program.

In Washington D. C., 109 grade schools were scheduled to start French, Spanish, and German classes this fall.

**MISCELLANY.** Thomas Mann was scheduled to address a gathering in Frankfurt on November 9, celebrating the opening of Gerhart Hauptmann week. — The first four rooms of the new Goethe Museum in Frankfurt were opened August 28, 1952. The present four-story building is the first of four units which will comprise the museum, extending from the restored Goethe House to Salzhaus Street. — At a meeting in Brussels the World Postal Union voted to restore German as one of the five languages in which its information bulletin is printed. Only Poland opposed the restoration.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Mein Bild von Stefan George.**

*Von Robert Boehringer. München: Helmut Küpper vormals Georg Bondi, 1951. 250 S. Text, 175 Tafeln. Preis in einem Band DM 32,50, in zwei Bdn. 37,50.*

Robert Boehringer was closely associated with Stefan George from 1905 until the poet's death in 1933. He published *Ewiger Augenblick*, reminiscences of George in dialogue form in 1945 and is well-known for his brilliant editorship of the George-Hofmannsthal correspondence (1938). Like the latter work his new book is distinguished by a generous and sensitive treatment of those who failed to identify themselves with George and his cause or who left him after a period of association. Entrusted with the administration of the poet's *Nachlaß*, he corresponded with as many friends and acquaintances of George as he could reach and thus gathered an impressive body of material, including extracts from letters, memoirs, conversations, books, and many photographs. The work consists of two volumes, one containing the text, the other the photographs.

It has been said of George that his appearance offers a perfect example of Anaximander's dictum that a complete mixture of all definable qualities will result in something perplexingly undefinable. The photographs in Boehringer's second volume break the mixture down into its components and document each one severally. The poet's portraits are fittingly complemented by pictures of members of his family as well as of the friends and associates who formed such an integral part of George's world. This collection is a labor of love, equalled in scope only by the text.

On account of the diversity of the material it was not always possible for the author to link the textual elements together by a continuous narration. A letter from George to the Belgian Edmond Rassenfosse (in 1895) is followed by Gustav Uddgren's description of George's appearance, an account of the poet's relationship to his cousin Saladin Schmitt by a description of the *Kugelzimmer*, where George lived during his frequent sojourns in Munich before the first World War. Another weakness arising from the nature of Boehringer's compilation is the factual and chronological overlapping within various parts of the book. He divides the life of the poet into its main periods and within each of these sketches briefly every one of George's significant friendships and encounters from beginning to end. In spite of the resulting repetitions, however, there arises a vivid and many-faceted impression of George as mirrored by his friends.

Some of the material merely enriches what is already known. Thus the George-Hofmannsthal correspondence is supplemented by that crucial letter of George's in which he first revealed to Hofmannsthal what the encounter meant to him, and we can see only too clearly why the sensitive Austrian shrank from the all-demanding affection of the older man. Similarly, the story of George's great friendship with Ida Coblenz has gained in depth by the complete enumeration of those of George's poems, including the whole of the *Hängenden Gärten* (and one prose piece, "Ein letzter Brief," in *Tage und Taten*), which according to Ida owe their origin to this unique relationship. In a penetrating account of the "Kosmiker" at Munich Boehringer squarely places the blame for the use of the swastika as an antisemitic emblem and for the wholesale corruption of Germany by Nazism on the shoulders of Klages and Schuler — surely, he exaggerates their role!

Other portions of the book's hitherto unpublished material provide entirely new insights, e.g. a short very cynical poem by George, called "Teufische Stanze," written prior to 1900, but never published because, as George explained later, "Ins Gedicht gehören solche Zynismen nicht, da ist nur Aufbauendes" (pp. 116 f.); the fragmentary poem "Bismarck"; the revelation that eight poems in the section "Gezeiten" of *Der Siebente Ring* were dedicated to Friedrich Gundolf in 1902 (an illustration of the synthetic nature of Maximin); a letter from Max Kommerell to his friend J. Anton in which he defends his apostasy from George after eight years of close association and in which he reasserts his own personality in no uncertain terms.

While Boehringer discusses the numerous defections from George and his circle frankly and without that haughty arrogance encountered elsewhere in the George literature, he yet passes severe judgment on all those who did not live up to the Master's challenge or who did not at least, like the author himself, find their way back to the fold after a period of estrangement. Thus Boehringer is somewhat chilly about Gundolf, but has much sympathy and admiration for Friedrich Wolters. Although he deplores Wolters' chauvinistic tendencies as much as did George, he gives him credit for having regained George's esteem in his last years. The author evidently tries to adjust Edgar Salin's unfavorable picture of Wolters (in *Um Stefan George*). In the copious and meticulously compiled footnotes, which incidentally are placed at the end of the volume, he includes a most laudatory character sketch of Wolters by one of the latter's disciples, Rudolf Fahrner.

In the last analysis, *Mein Bild von Stefan George* is pervaded by the same unshakable conviction which is held by all genuine George followers, i.e. that the Master was the great poet and pedagogue of twentieth century Germany and that his circle represented the finest flower of German youth. The outsider might conclude however that a form of life founded on a spiritual dictatorship (no matter how nobly conceived) within an exclusively male elite cannot in our time furnish the basis of culture. But, however critical one may be of the *geistige Bewegung*, Boehringer's book conveys like none other the unique fascination of George's artistic genius and the radiance which filled those who came under his influence.

University of Massachusetts.

—Ulrich K. Goldsmith

#### An Historical Dictionary of German Figurative Usage.

By Keith Spalding. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952. Fascicle 1, vii + 40 pp. 10s. 6d.

With the appearance of the first fascicle of Professor Spalding's Dictionary an important work of many years has begun to be made available to English-speaking teachers and students of German. The definition and explanation of German idioms and figures of speech here presented bids fair to offer much more information of the sort which has made Hermann Paul's *Deutsches Wörterbuch* indispensable.

The publishers announce that the dictionary is to be published in approximately twenty-four parts to be issued at intervals of six or eight months; that the price of each issue is estimated to be 10s. 6d., but that fluctuating costs may force changes. Subscribers may be asked to pay more, or less, for individual parts, but will be free to terminate their subscriptions at any point.

In his introductory remarks the author delimits with precision the fields from which he has sought his entries, saying what he intends to exclude as well as what he means to enter. Briefly, the dictionary is to "list every word in the German language which has acquired a figurative meaning as distinct from its original physical one." It will try to explain the origins of the figurative meanings, and to give the earliest listings known. It will exclude words which have not been in current use in the last two hundred years, since the author has particularly in mind the needs of students of German literature in schools and universities, especially with respect to the works of Lessing, Wieland, Herder, Goethe, Schiller, and those later writers usually read.

Obviously, each entry in such a dictionary constitutes a problem for itself. I have looked carefully at each of the entries in this first fascicle without finding anything to which I could properly object on the grounds of accuracy. Whenever a dubious explanation is put forward the author designates it as such and the reader is duly warned. He has drawn very largely from Kluge, Götze, Trübner, Paul, Weigand, Schulz-Basler, as well as from Grimm and Lexer, but he has also contributed notably from his own studies and his citations of the journal literature are numerous.

Quite naturally, Professor Spalding writes British English, and hence some of the English idiomatic expressions which he equates with German idioms will have an interest of their own for American readers. Some examples are: *den Aal schuppen* 'hold a guinea-pig by its tail,' *man soll den Tag nicht vor dem Abend loben* 'don't whistle till you are out of wood,' *sich abführen* 'to hop it,' *er hat abgehaust* 'he is in queer street,' *absacken* 'off-load,' *er ist in Acht und Bann* 'he has been sent to Coventry,' *Allerweltskerl* 'a clubbable, four-square man.' This trait is not cited as an objectionable one; surely we do well to keep ourselves aware of differences between British and American idiom, and only rarely does this feature make the author's meaning obscure for an American reader.

Typographically, the book has been very well treated indeed. I noted only two things which are real misprints: the head-word *absäbeln* has been printed without Umlaut, and on page 25 the item on *Affenliebe* has 'to' for 'do' in the clause: 'kill with kindness as fond apes to their young.' I think that the printing would have been just as effective (and less expensive) without the colon which is set after each bold-face head-word for which a definition is immediately given, and I think a bit more care in the use of the semicolon would have been helpful. Specifically, I should have set a semicolon instead of a comma in such definitions as: *abschreiben* copy, wear out with writing; *abtreten* step aside, desert; *abtun* put away, settle; *anbauen* cultivate, settle down; *anbrennen* begin to burn, mark by burning.

There is, inevitably, a good deal of abbreviation in the text of the several entries. The author gives a brief key to the principal abbreviations, and this is adequate as far as it goes. However, there are altogether too many blind references such as: Luther 8.284a; Goethe 19.273; Jean Paul 41.55; Platen 294; Lessing 1.395; Wieland 7.360. To be sure, "it is intended to give a comprehensive list" of the works referred to or quoted, when the dictionary is completed. Yet no such list will show which of Goethe's works is meant by 18.273 and most readers will have no way to find this out. This kind of citation is facile, but almost completely useless to the majority of readers; I hope there will be much less of it in subsequent fascicles.

University of Wisconsin.

—R-M. S. Heffner

**Allgemeine Literaturwissenschaft.**

*Von Max Wehrli. Wissenschaftliche Forschungsberichte, Geisteswissenschaftliche Reihe, Band 3. Bern: A. Francke A. G. Verlag, 1951. 168 S. Fr. 9,40.*

Dieses überaus nützliche Buch, mit Geist, Umsicht und Takt geschrieben, berichtet über mehrere hundert Neuerscheinungen aus den Jahren 1939 bis 1950, greift jedoch häufig bis 1930 und manchmal noch weiter zurück. Es behandelt vor allem die Literatur in deutscher Sprache, berücksichtigt aber auch die amerikanische, französische und englische Forschung und gelegentlich auch die anderer Länder. Eine große Zahl von Werken wird charakterisiert und systematisch geordnet, sodaß Übereinstimmungen und Widersprüche der Hauptrichtungen klar zutage treten. Auf diese Weise wird das Referat zu einer Problemschau, der Überblick über den Stand der Forschung zu einer Darstellung ihrer Problematik.

Unter allgemeiner Literaturwissenschaft versteht Max Wehrli „die Wissenschaft von Wesen, Ursprung, Erscheinungsformen und Lebenszusammenhängen der literarischen Kunst, . . . speziell die Wissenschaft von den Prinzipien und Methoden der wissenschaftlichen Literaturbetrachtung.“ Das gewaltige Gebiet, das von dieser Definition umfaßt wird, teilt er in fünf Provinzen: Systematik der Literaturwissenschaft; Textkritik und Editionstechnik; Poetik; biographische, psychologische und soziologische Literaturbetrachtung; und Literarhistorie. Innerhalb der deutschsprachigen Forschung haben Poetik und Literarhistorie in der Berichtszeit die einschneidendsten Veränderungen erfahren, während die Anregungen, die von der Soziologie und der Tiefenpsychologie ausgegangen sind, in anderen Ländern, besonders den angelsächsischen, weit stärker gewirkt haben als in Deutschland, und zwar auf die Dichtung selbst ebenso wie auf die Literaturwissenschaft. Die Sonderstellung der Deutschen schreibt Wehrli den Nachwirkungen der geistesgeschichtlichen Richtung zu sowie dem deutschen Idealismus überhaupt. Jedoch nimmt er diesen und die auf ihm beruhende „stolze deutsche Wissenschaftstradition“ in Schutz gegen die vielerlei Vorwürfe, die ihnen in den letzten Jahrzehnten gemacht worden sind.

Bezeichnend für die neue Lage ist, daß Wehrlis Kapitel „Poetik“ in zwei Teile zerfällt, deduktive und induktive Poetik, und daß letztere, die sogenannte Werkpoetik, bei weitem das größere Interesse beansprucht. Mit der Wendung zur Werkpoetik und zur Interpretation hat die Literaturbetrachtung eine Richtung eingeschlagen, die mit dem Existentialismus parallel läuft. Sie verzichtet auf Wissenschaftlichkeit im alten und strengen Sinne, indem sie das dichterische Werk nicht mehr von außen, von einem festen und objektiven Standpunkt, betrachtet, einreiht und wertet, sondern von innen zu erfassen sucht. Das Werk kommt erst in dem Erleben des Lesers zur Existenz, so wie dieser erst durch das Eingehen ins Werk zum Verstehen kommt. Das Gegenüber des wissenschaftlichen Subjekts und Objekts ist ersetzt durch das Ineinander von erlebtem Werk und wirkendem Erleben.

Mit dem Schlagwort „existentielle Literaturbetrachtung“ wäre jedoch sehr wenig gesagt. Die maßgeblichen Werke der letzten zwölf Jahre haben weder einen gemeinsamen Ausgangspunkt noch ein gemeinsames Ziel. Emil Staigers Bücher, die sich am entschiedensten zu Heidegger bekennen, sind zugleich Produkte eines durchaus selbständigen und sehr starken Denkers; Erich Auerbachs Begriff „Wirklichkeit“ ist unabhängig vom Existentialismus gefaßt und läßt sich nicht ohne weiteres auf ihn beziehen; und Günther Müllers morphologische Literaturbetrachtung fußt auf Goethe und nicht auf dem Existentialismus, obwohl Goethes Satz, „Die Erscheinung ist vom Beobachter nicht losgelöst, vielmehr in die Individualität desselben verschlungen und verwickelt,“ gewiß von Heidegger unterschrieben würde. Fast allgemein ist dagegen das Bestreben, die alte Form-Inhalt Dichotomie bei der Analyse von Dichtungen zu vermeiden. Man sagt jetzt Form, Gestalt, Struktur, Organismus oder Stil und meint damit das gesamte Dasein des Werkes,

seine Geschlossenheit, Harmonie und interne Konsequenz, begreift also in den Wörtern, die früher das „Äußerliche“ bezeichneten, zugleich das „Innerliche“ mit ein. Der neue Sprachgebrauch soll das Bestehen eines Inhalts oder Gehalts nicht leugnen, will aber andeuten, daß das Inhaltliche sich als Form darstellt und an der Form, dem einmaligen Geformtsein, erkannt wird. Immerhin ist es mißlich, daß man nicht auch umgekehrt Inhalt oder Gehalt sagen und mit diesen Begriffen zugleich das Bedeutungsvolle, die Symbolhaftigkeit der formalen Elemente ausdrücken kann. Daß für die eigentlich gemeinte Ganzheit des dichterischen Phänomens bisher kein überzeugendes neues Wort gefunden worden ist, erregt ein gewisses Unbehagen und Zweifel an der Zuverlässigkeit des philosophischen Unterbaus. Derselbe Zweifel muß sich gegen die amerikanischen „new critics“ richten, die in der Dichotomie „structure-texture“ zwar ein sehr wertvolles neues Werkzeug der Interpretation gefunden haben, aber gleichfalls die alten Formbegriffe zu Form-Inhalt-Begriffen gemacht haben.

Mißstände dieser Art sowohl wie die Grenzen einer Interpretationskunst, die sich auf das vorliegende Werk beschränkt und alle historischen, biographischen und außerkünstlerischen Bezüge außer Acht läßt, haben inzwischen den Ruf nach erneutem Bemühen um die Geschichte der Literatur laut werden lassen. Gerade Meister der Interpretation wie Staiger (*Neophilologus*, 1951) und Trunz (*Studium Generale*, 1952) warnen vor einem ängstlich am Werke klebenden Verfahren und betonen, daß dem Interpreten umfassende Kenntnisse unerlässlich sind; umgekehrt betrachten sie die Einzelinterpretation als Beitrag zu einer erneuerten, werk- und wertbetonenden Literarhistorie. Wie sich die künftige Literaturgeschichtsschreibung gestalten wird, scheint noch nicht klar. Ohne Zweifel wird sie dem neuen Zeitbegriff Rechnung tragen müssen. Tiefenpsychologie und Anthropologie haben bewiesen, daß die jeweilige menschliche Existenz nicht ein bloßer Punkt in einer linearen Entwicklung sondern ein Schichtengefüge ist, in dem alle Zeiten zugleich vorhanden sind. Echtes Dasein steigt immer neu aus dem Ursprung hervor, und echte Kunst ist nicht Entwicklung sondern Wiederholung (Wehrli, S. 133). Der Rückgriff auf die reine Annalistik, den eine von Heinz Otto Burger herausgegebene Literaturgeschichte (1952) versucht, ist wohl nicht mehr als ein Notbehelf, mag aber künftigen Historikern als Sprungbrett dienen. Die große Masse des Schrifttums mag in der Tat nicht mehr sein als eine Kette von empirischen Gegebenheiten, und man wird gut daran tun, in Zukunft den chronologischen Ablauf nicht leichthin als kausalen Nexus zu deuten. Auf die großen dichterischen Leistungen fällt dagegen durch die annalistische Aufreihung wenig Licht (vielmehr liefern sie selbst die Daten für die Periodisierung), und sie entziehen sich erst recht der kausalen Herleitung durch das Aufspüren von Quellen, Einflüssen und Nachahmungen. Für die großen Werke vor allem gilt die von O. F. Bollnow vorgenommene Korrektur des Existentialismus, derzufolge der Mensch nicht nur Geschichte erleidet sondern auch Geschichte schafft. Im großen Dichtwerk werden die ewigen Formen künstlerischer Aussprache schöpferisch erneuert, jedoch unter dem Druck der gegenwärtigen Existenz. Es liegt also im Felde eines Koordinatensystems, dessen Ordinate aus dem „Ursprung“ aufsteigt und dessen Abszisse den historischen Ablauf bezeichnet. Der geometrische Vergleich deutet eine literarhistorische Methode an, die nicht nur die chronologische Stelle sondern auch die Höhenlage von Dichtungen systematisch bezeichnen könnte.

Bedeutende Proben einer solchen erneuerten Literaturgeschichtsschreibung liegen vor in Paul Böckmanns *Formgeschichte der deutschen Dichtung* (1949), in den Studien über Archetypen und überhaupt über dichterische Symbolik, und in E. R. Curtius' Unternehmen, die Konstanz der antik-abendländischen Literatur exakt nachzuweisen an Hand einer Anzahl von Topoi, d. h. traditioneller Motiv- und Formelemente. Mit einer Würdigung und Kritik von Curtius' monumentalem Werk schließt Wehrlis Buch. Der Rezessent jedoch darf nicht schließen, ohne noch

einmal die geistige Kraft des Autors zu rühmen, der ein so großes widerspenstiges und schwieriges Material bewältigt hat. Schon als bibliographisches Nachschlagewerk ist Wehrlis Buch außerordentlich wertvoll; als Einführung in die Probleme der modernen Literaturwissenschaft stellt es sich — trotz seines referierenden Charakters — neben Wellek und Warren.

*University of Wisconsin.*

—Heinrich Henel

**Kürschners Deutscher Literatur-Kalender 1952.**

*Redaktion: Dr. Friedrich Bertkau. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1952. 611 S.*

Die 52. Auflage des literarischen *Almanac de Gotha* für das gegenwärtige deutsche Schrifttum kann als eine gründliche und ausgezeichnete Neubearbeitung bezeichnet werden. Vor zwei Jahren kam der Kalender zum erstenmal seit dem Ende des Krieges heraus — zum erstenmal auch seit der Beseitigung der von der Reichsschrifttumskammer angeordneten Einschränkungen. Aber auch' diese erste Ausgabe litt noch sehr unter dem mangelnden Anschriftenmaterial, sodaß wichtige im Auslande lebende Schriftsteller und Schriftstellerinnen nicht einmal erwähnt waren. Dr. Bertkau und seine ungenannten Mitarbeiter haben diesem Mangel abgeholfen und so ist es ihm gelungen, dem *Kürschner* wieder den alten Rang des wichtigsten Nachschlagewerkes für zeitgenössische deutsche Literatur zurückzugeben.

Ein etwas erneuertes System erweist sich als besonders nützlich und übersichtlich: nach einer umfangreichen Liste der notwendigen Abkürzungen und Erklärungen, finden wir das Verzeichnis deutschsprachiger Schriftsteller und Schriftstellerinnen — etwa 1500. Name, Adresse, die Geburtsdaten und das Schaffensfeld sind jeweils im ersten Absatz eines Artikelchens angeführt, dem dann die Liste der veröffentlichten Bücher mit dem Datum der Ersterscheinung folgt. Angaben über Filme und Hörspiele stellen eine wichtige Erweiterung dar. Wie immer erscheinen die von einem Autor herausgegebenen oder übersetzten Werke in einem besonderen Absatz, öfters ist auch die Bibliographie wichtiger Veröffentlichungen über einen Schriftsteller angeführt.

Eine fast vollständige Totenliste mit manchmal sehr erschütternden kurzen Angaben, oft ungenau — nicht durch die Schuld der Herausgeber — folgt: von dem Verfasser des *Jettchen Gebert* Georg Hermann Borchardt heißt es nach dem Kreuz nur: „Auschwitz 43.“ Adam Kuckhoff starb zu „Berlin am 4. VIII. 43“ — nämlich hingerichtet als Widerstandskämpfer in der Strafanstalt Plötzensee.

Die schöngestigten Verlage Deutschlands, Österreichs und der Schweiz, Bühnenvertriebsanstalten, schöngestigte deutsche Zeitschriften, Autorenverbände, Akademien und Stiftungen sind dann in besonderen Kapiteln angeführt.

Wir möchten in diesem Zusammenhang den Wunsch aussprechen, daß in der nächsten Ausgabe dieses wichtigen Werkes die Liste der Zeitschriften tatsächlich *à jour* gebracht werden möge: Die *Neue Rundschau* fehlt und viele andere. Es gibt auch mehr deutsche Verlage im nichtdeutschen Ausland als angeführt.

Abschließend läßt sich aber sagen, daß keine Hochschulbibliothek ihre deutsche Abteilung vollständig nennen kann, oder auch nur als für ernste Studienzwecke geeignet, die nicht ihren Kürschner in der Handbibliothek Lehrern und Studenten zur Verfügung stellen kann.

*Clark College.*

—Robert Rie

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